

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

CHRISTMAS NUMBER 1958



"THE REST ON THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT,"

BY FILIPPINO LIPPI (1457-1504).

(Reproduced by courtesy of Major-General Sir Harold Wernher, Bt., Luton Hoo, Beds.)

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot—"



EDINBURGH CASTLE



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM

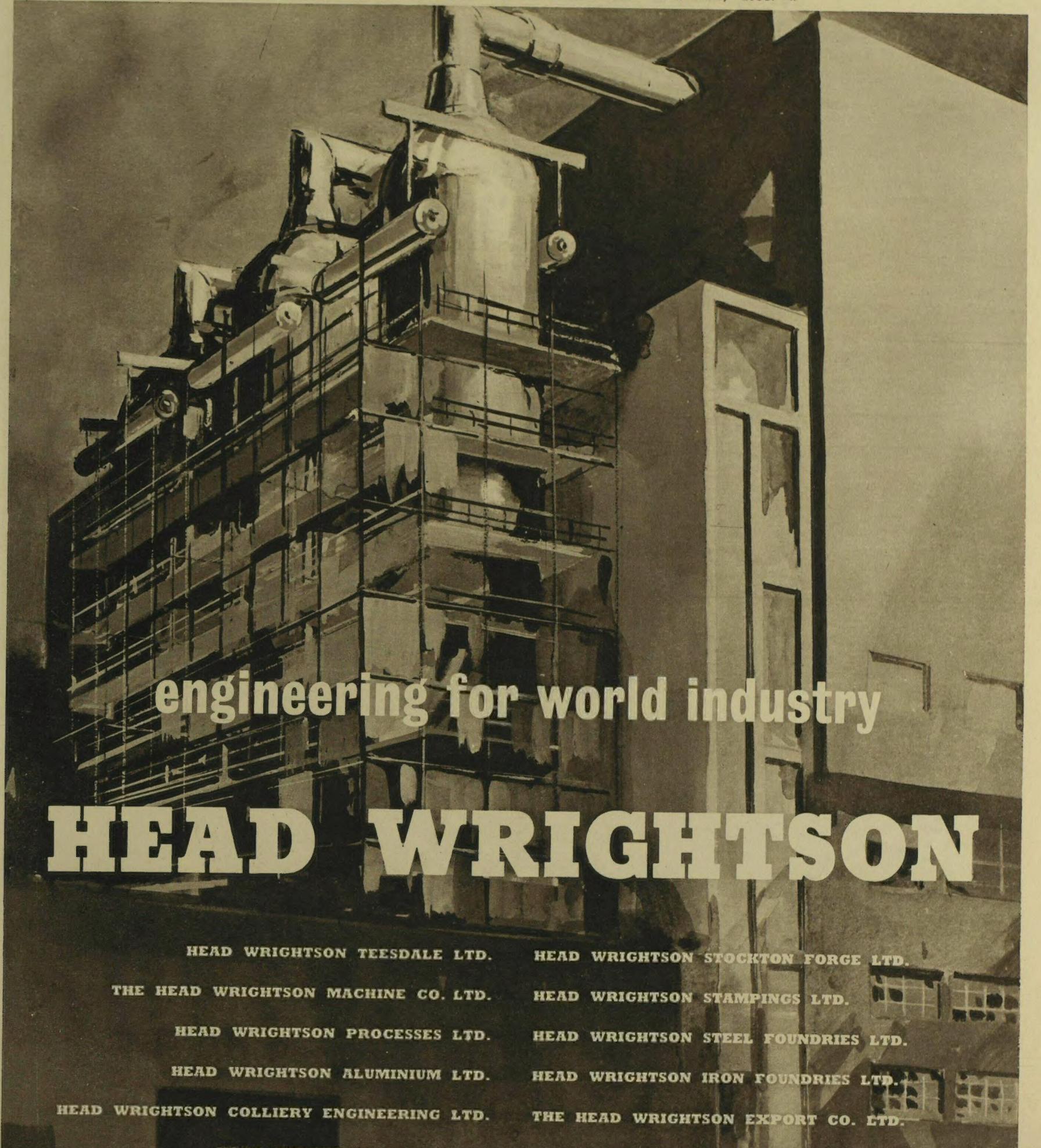
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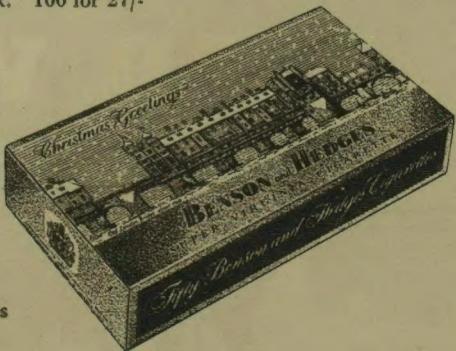


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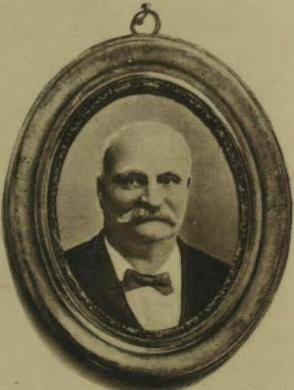
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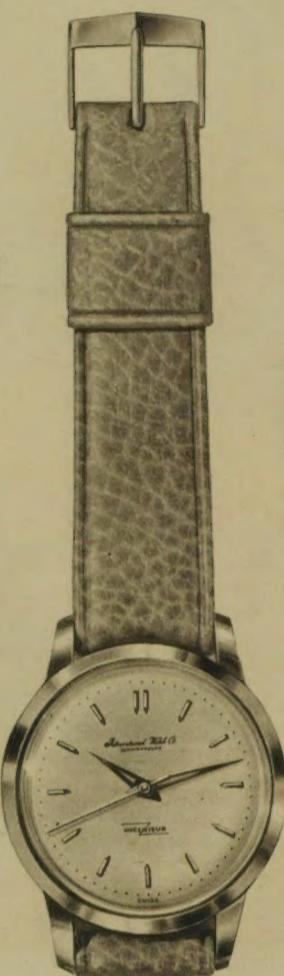
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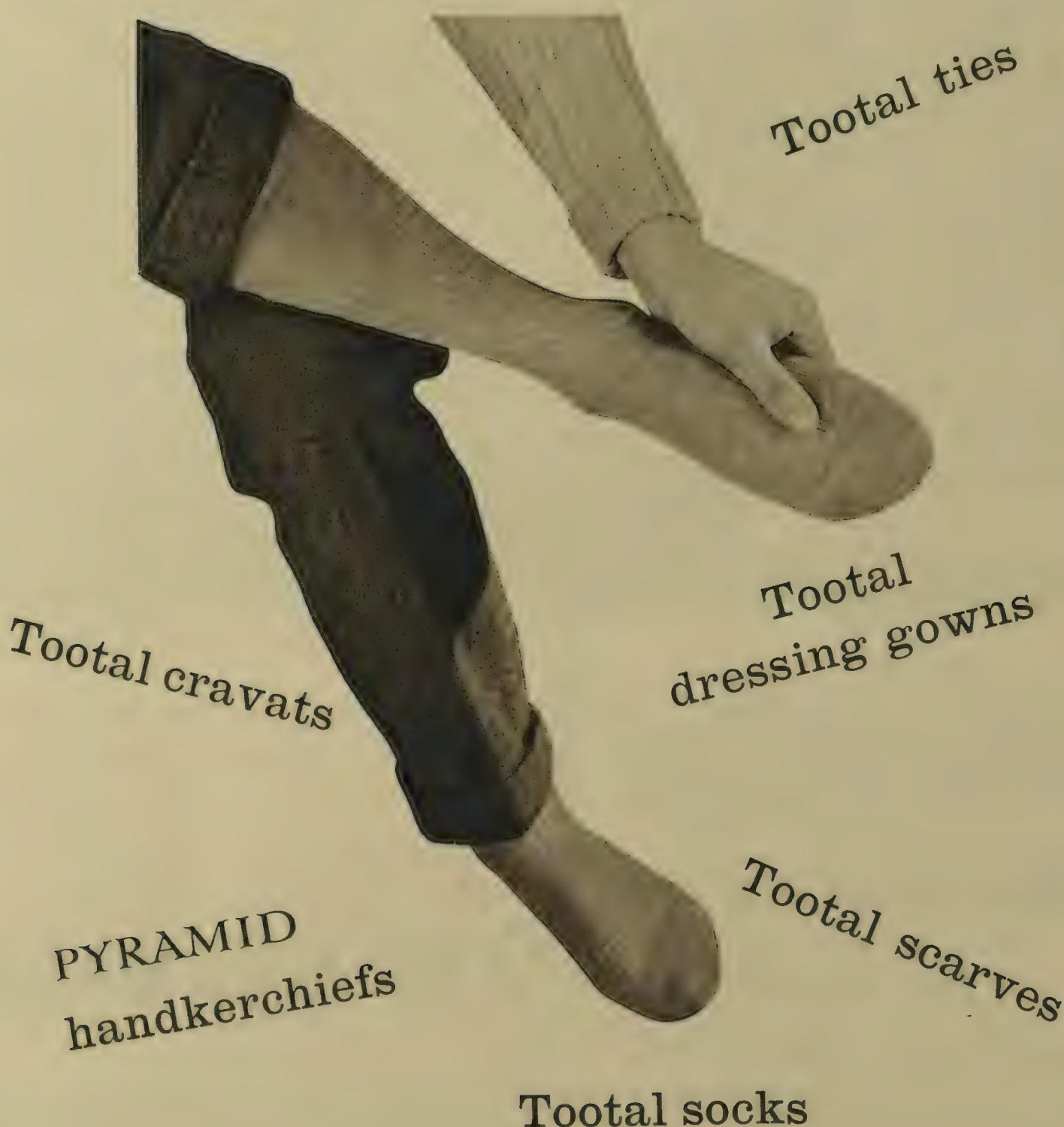
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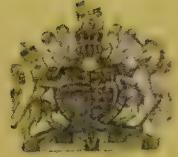


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At 9/11 a pair they might seem dear, but what if they have the life of two pairs...? Tootal Bulk Nylon Socks with the new "Cushiony" feel—8/11 a pair, also ankle length 7/6 a pair. All Tootal Men's wear is well-designed, beautifully finished and guaranteed to the hilt. You can't go wrong with a Tootal gift.

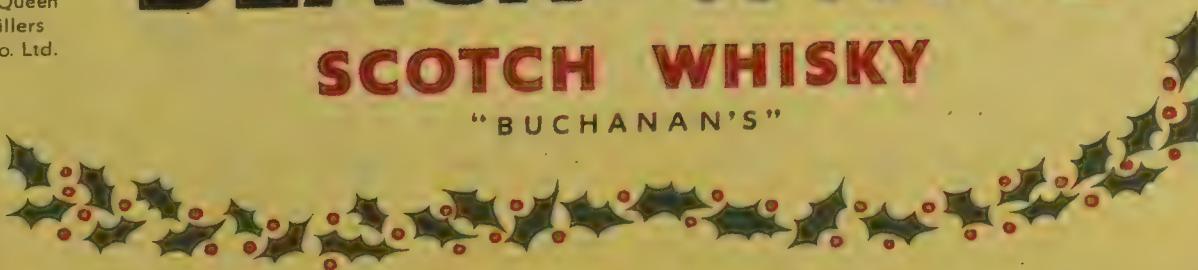


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THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

CHRISTMAS NUMBER 1958



ON CHRISTMAS DAY "DOWN UNDER": PICKING CHRISTMAS BUSH IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

In Australia Christmas comes in midsummer, and coincides with the principal summer holiday period of the year when many Australians are at the seaside or in the mountains. Every State in Australia has its own Christmas bush or tree, so named by the early settlers because it bloomed at Christmas-time and could be used for decoration then. New South

Wales has one of the most colourful of these shrubs—*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*—which makes a brilliant display in the gardens of the Sydney area. The shrubs are usually 10 to 15 ft. high, but they can reach heights of 40 ft. or more. The colourful flowers provide striking decoration for a midsummer Christmas, and can, of course, be picked on Christmas Day.

Colour photograph by courtesy of the Australian News and Information Bureau.

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"CREEPING LIKE SNAIL UNWILLINGLY TO SCHOOL": OR THE ETERNAL SCHOOLBOY, A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

"The world is so full of a number of things, I 'm sure we should all be as happy as kings"; if only we hadn't to go to school; if only the things we can't do were not so delightful; if only the big boy who has taken a dislike to our nice peaked cap weren't certain to be waiting round the next corner; if only we

could listen again to "A Good Band" instead of declining *mensa*. But no: "'twas ever thus"—even a hundred years ago when John McDonald, R.S.A. (1829-1901), painted this picture for the Royal Scottish Academy and called it "Going to School" or "A Schoolboy standing at a Street Corner."

Reproduced by courtesy of P. and D. Colnaghi and Co., Ltd.



THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN HISTORY AND LEGEND—I: MARTIN LUTHER'S TREE, ABOUT 1533.

As well as the other origins of the Christmas tree mentioned by William J. Forbes in his article on page 9, there is besides a belief—which is especially popular in Germany—that Martin Luther invented the custom. One Christmas Eve, it is related, he was greatly moved by the firmament of shining stars, and on arriving home he sought to convey his feelings to his family

by standing a young fir tree in the darkened house and placing candles on its branches and lighting them. The Christmas tree was certainly an early practice among the Lutherans and one firmly established and hallowed in Germany long before it spread through Europe. But there were besides many tree customs in other countries from which the cult could have developed.

Specially drawn for "The Illustrated London News" by Pauline Baynes.



THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN HISTORY AND LEGEND—II : STRASBURG, THE EARLIEST AUTHENTIC RECORD (1605).

In 1605, as Mr. Forbes recalls on page 9, a Strasburg merchant wrote : "At Christmas, they set up fir trees in the parlours at Strasburg and hang thereon roses cut out of many-coloured paper, apples, wafers, gold-foil, sweets, etc...." This, it is claimed, is the earliest authentic record of the Christmas tree as we know it ; and our artist's pleasing reconstruction of this custom seems

to look both backwards and forwards. Forwards, especially to that spreading American custom of setting the tree so that it is visible from the street, so that every home adds to the general adornment ; and backwards to that ancient and pre-Christian cult of the evergreen and the simulation of flowers, to sustain the belief that "if winter comes, can spring be far behind ?"



THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN HISTORY AND LEGEND—III : THE LADY OF WITTENBERG AND HER CHILDREN (1737).

In 1737 (Mr. Forbes writes) a member of the University of Wittenberg described the little trees, bearing lighted candles, which a country lady he knew had for each of her children—who came one by one to take the trees and the gifts laid beneath them. This might as easily have been a description of a German Christmas party in 1937, so little has the custom changed

in two centuries. In 1798, when Coleridge visited Germany, he was surprised at the keen delight of his hosts in their Christmas tree, which he described as a pleasing novelty; but by the end of that century the Christmas tree was fairly general throughout Germany, although it was for long a purely Protestant practice and the peasants were slow to adopt it.

Specially drawn for "The Illustrated London News" by Pauline Baynes.



THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN HISTORY AND LEGEND—IV: IN QUEEN CAROLINE'S HOUSEHOLD IN THE 1820'S.

It is generally believed that it was Prince Albert who brought the Christmas tree to England; and there is no doubt that it was the Windsor Castle Christmas tree of 1841 which established the custom in this country. Some twenty years, however, before Prince Albert came to be the Royal Consort, Germans of the household of Queen Caroline set up Christmas trees bright

with candles and hung with presents for the English children of the palace. Princess Lieven had a tree at Panshanger in 1829; Baron Bunsen one at Llanover in 1838, and in 1831 a Swiss governess prepared a Christmas tree for the family of Baroness Bloomfield. By 1840 there was already a thriving market in pine-tops, for German immigrants in the Manchester district.

THE beautiful Christmas trees which Norway has given London each year since 1947, tall, symmetrical, decked with "snow" and glittering with tinsel and bright lights, have made Trafalgar Square the centre of Christmas festivities in England. The Christmas tree, bearing gifts and suggestive of the romantic north of Santa Claus and white Christmases, has been the highlight of the season for generations of children, but the gathering of citizens round a large tree in public festival is a recent innovation.

The practice seems to have originated in American cities early this century. In 1909 citizens of Pasadena decorated a tree on Mount Wilson with lights and tinsel and hung it with gifts which they distributed on Christmas Day. A Christmas tree was set up in Madison Square, New York, in 1912, and another on Boston Common, and in Philadelphia, in 1914, great choirs sang carols round a tree in Independence Square.

Although the customs we associate with the Christmas tree are little more than a century old in England, European legend attributes their origin to an eighth-century Englishman, Saint Boniface, or Winfrid of Crediton, a missionary in Germany. Before a crowd of barbarians one Christmas Eve, he cut down a sacred oak beneath which they had made human sacrifices. The blood-stained tree "fell like a tower, groaning as it split asunder," but close by the ruin, a young fir tree stood miraculously unharmed. Contrasting this erect, unstained tree with the fallen oak, Winfrid said to the people: "This little tree, a young child in the forest, shall be your holy tree to-night." And the holy tree it has remained.

Tree worship had a prominent place in many ancient mythologies. In Scandinavia, the ash, Yggdrasil, was the Tree of Time, whose roots would be gnawed by a serpent until the tree fell and all things came to an end. The old Germanic priests hung lights and offerings on the sacred tree beneath which they had offered sacrifices, and we know that wherever Roman legions marched they decorated pine trees with little masks of Bacchus in the festival of the Saturnalia. A practice, still surviving in parts of Europe, was to put cherry or hawthorn trees in pots indoors, so that they might blossom at Christmas. This custom may derive from the story that trees blossomed amidst the snow and ice on the night of Christ's birth. In England, a similar belief was connected with Saint Joseph of Arimathea, whose staff put forth leaves, when he planted it in the earth at Glastonbury, and blossomed every Christmas.

The earliest authentic record of Christmas trees as we know them to-day is in a manuscript in which a Strasburg merchant wrote in 1605: "At Christmas, they set up fir trees in the parlours at Strasburg and hang thereon roses cut out of many-coloured paper, apples, wafers, gold-foil, sweets, etc."

It is widely believed that Prince Albert introduced the Christmas tree into England in the 1840's, but there are records of it in England before then, and some historians contend that it may have evolved independently from the centuries-old English custom of the kissing bough which consisted of evergreens hung from the ceiling and decorated with candles, apples and small presents, with a mistletoe hanging from the centre.

At least twenty years before Prince Albert came to England, Germans of the household of Queen Caroline set up Christmas trees bright with candles and hung with presents for the English children of the Palace. Princess Lieven had a tree at Panshanger in 1829, Baron Bunsen at Llanover in 1838, and a Swiss governess prepared a Christmas tree in 1831 for the family of Baroness Bloomfield. More important in their influence were the German immigrants who brought the tree with them to Manchester, where it gained such a hold that William Howitt reported in 1840 that "it is spreading fast among the English there—pine-tops being brought to market for the purpose which are generally illuminated

with a taper for every day of the year."

But there is no doubt that the custom became popular only when Prince Albert brought the Christmas tree to Windsor in 1841. In that year he wrote: "To-day I have two children of my own to give presents to who, they know not why, are full of happy wonder at the German

Christmas tree and its radiant candles." All England was soon "full of happy wonder" when the journals came out with lavish pictures and articles describing the celebrations at the Palace. There were trees for the Queen, the Prince, the children and members of the household, all decorated with paper toys and bells of many colours, each tree having "above eighty wax lights" which were kept burning for twelve nights. The larger toys and gifts were spread beneath the trees and guests were invited to view the display.

Emulating the enthusiasm of the Royal family, people of all classes quickly adopted the tree which Dickens, for all his zeal for Christmas, scorned as "the new German toy." A great glittering tree was erected at Crystal Palace in 1854 and hundreds of small trees were sold at Covent Garden. In 1864, Chambers wrote that "the custom has been introduced into England with the greatest success."

The bright, sparkling tree which gave the Royal family so much joy had conquered Britain.

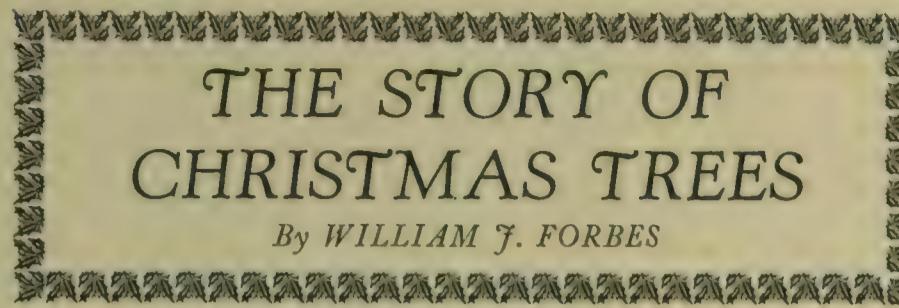
On the Continent, the Christmas tree was introduced into Finland about 1800, Denmark and Norway about 1830, France in 1840, and gradually spread to the Catholic countries of Southern Europe. German immigrants in Pennsylvania had taken the custom to America long before this and kept it up for decades before it began to spread through the country. The first trees sold in New York were brought down from the Catskills in 1851 by a woodsman, named Mark Carr, who quickly sold them all on a Manhattan street corner. Thousands of trees are sold now every Christmas on Mark Carr's Corner.

The fir tree has been almost universally adopted as the Christmas tree. It is, of course, a common tree in the cold northern climates where the custom is most popular, but there is more to it than that. To the old Germans, the evergreen fir tree was the symbol of endless life. St. Winfrid, the Christian, expressed sentiments cherished by pagans when he said: "It is the wood of peace, for your houses are built of the fir. It is the sign of an endless life, for its leaves are evergreen."

In those countries where the fir is not common, especially in the Southern Hemisphere, other trees are made to do in the traditional Christmas celebrations. In country towns in Australia, for instance, the veranda posts abutting on main streets are decorated with the boughs of gum trees—an Australian survival of an old English practice. John Stow, in his "Survey of London" in 1598, described how "The Conduits and Standares in the streets are decked with holme, ivie, bayes and whatsoever the season of the year afforded to be greene."

A modern practice is that of placing a large Christmas tree in the nave of cathedrals and churches, at the foot of which children place toys which are given to hospitals. Two trees, brought every Christmas from the Queen's estate at Sandringham, are set up in St. Paul's, one at the west end of the nave, one in the portico.

Churches in America have made the Christmas tree the centre of a service on Christmas Eve. The tree stands before the congregation and the church is in darkness when the ceremony commences with the singing of the psalm: "Out of the Depths." Then various Messianic prophecies are read out by different voices, at each of which a candle is lit on the tree. Further candles are lit as the Gospel is read and carols sung until the ceremony reaches its climax with the words "I am the Light of the World," and the tree is brilliant with burning candles.



GATHERED ROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE AT WINDSOR CASTLE: QUEEN VICTORIA, PRINCE ALBERT, WHO MADE THE CHRISTMAS TREE POPULAR IN THIS COUNTRY, AND THEIR CHILDREN. THIS ENGRAVING, BY J. L. WILLIAMS, APPEARED IN THE CHRISTMAS SUPPLEMENT OF THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS IN 1848.

The Christmas tree, "somewhat more of a German than an English custom," was popularised in this country by Prince Albert, who brought it to Windsor in 1841. The Christmas tree shown in this engraving was described in *The Illustrated London News* in 1848 as "that which is annually prepared by her Majesty's command for the Royal children. Similar trees are arranged in other apartments of the Castle for her Majesty, his Royal Highness Prince Albert, her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent, and the Royal household. . . . Her Majesty's tree is furnished by his Royal Highness Prince Albert, whilst that of the Prince is furnished according to the taste of her Majesty."

congregation and the church is in darkness when the ceremony commences with the singing of the psalm: "Out of the Depths." Then various Messianic prophecies are read out by different voices, at each of which a candle is lit on the tree. Further candles are lit as the Gospel is read and carols sung until the ceremony reaches its climax with the words "I am the Light of the World," and the tree is brilliant with burning candles.



"The girls didn't look up at her, but the older woman did. I have seldom seen a more venomous expression flood over a face. Fury, bitterness, contempt . . ."

THE GIRL IN THE POLO-NECKED SWEATER

By AMY O'NEILL.

© 1958. AMY O'NEILL.

Illustrations by T. S. La FONTAINE.

HSUPPOSE it begins when Hugh Aphorpe leaned over the reception desk to speak to me. I walked across the small crowded lounge. The sight of him always cost me a pang. He was so like Robert, Robert my love, whom I should never see again.

"Miss Marchant," he said, "could I ask a favour of you?" The faint Welsh intonation sang in his voice. "Could I ask you to change your room?"

I had come to this small hotel on the borders of Wales for a respite, for a complete change, and, finding it charming, I had stayed. I had nowhere else to go! My only relations were some cousins in Australia, and they were not interested in a spinster nurse. Also I had been out of England far too long to have roots anywhere. Here, to my surprise, I found the people so friendly that I wanted to become one of them; the village was so peaceful that I wanted to live here for ever. The days held no terror of mass executions, nor the nights the horror of burning homes.

Their greatest worry, it seemed to me (in my blind ignorance), was that it might rain for the football match, or that Blodwen would have a cold when she was given a solo in "The Messiah"! Each little white-washed home appeared to me to contain a happy contented little family. In fact, they were all related. How I longed to be like them! To have people, a home and children—and a man—

"Oh, Mr. Aphorpe!" I exclaimed, "why do you want me to move?"

He hesitated, fidgeting with the visitors' book.

"At Christmas time," he said, "we get pretty busy. More of the local people come into the Bar, and sometimes it gets a bit rowdy. There's a little room overlooking the garden at the back—"

"I do so like my window," I went on, trying not to look at the way his hair curled. "When you've lived for years in a flat plain with blazing sun, it's such a thrill to have to strain upwards to see the sky, and then

find the mountain all shrouded in mist. I can hear the sheep bleating as I lie in bed."

"It wouldn't be for more than a few nights," he went on, unhappily.

I wondered if he were expecting a wealthy guest; some local boy made good, perhaps. Because the room I had was certainly the best. I know the Welsh! They never miss a chance. I'd stay where I was!

"You see," Hugh looked at me with his liquid brown eyes, "by now we think of you almost as one of the family, if you don't mind my saying so. And I wouldn't like you to be disturbed. And I'm sure you would be. It would be quite easy if you would let us move your things?"

A woman like me, who has knocked about alone, has to be tough. But what was the sense in being difficult among such friendly people? Robert's eyes were brown too. He had an educated voice, of course, but his hair curled so softly.

The room I was asked to look at was in a much older part of the house. You went down steps into it, steps dark and shiny with age. It had a very wide, shallow window, such as you see in old weavers' cottages, with gay chintz curtains and a little frill along the top. There was a half-tester bed, at least 150 years old, hung with the same chintz; and in the corner, a wonderful old press. It was carved, and had faces as drawer-handles.

Just then, a young woman came through the garden. I suppose from the arbour. At a glance I could see she didn't "belong." The other women wore serviceable skirts under work-soiled, coloured aprons, and dull woollies moulded to their lumpy figures. She, however, was wearing an acid-yellow, high-necked jersey, and bright blue jeans; her ear-rings were flashy and her shoes spelled town. In spite of that, she was amazingly pretty.

I've seen many shades of race mixtures. Girls with a touch of Kanaka or a hint of Siamese. Somehow, they always look lovely. It's said that they take the good looks and bad blood from each side. They age quickly, of course, but to my mind, nothing can be more beautiful than a graceful Oriental figure teamed with a clear nordic skin, and crowned with the bloom of youth.

The girl in the polo-necked sweater was one of the loveliest things I have ever seen. The luxuriant black curls and creamy complexion gave the slightest suggestion of the tar brush. Cardiff docks, I thought. Some girls have a pretty face and a poor shape; but here all the Graces had conspired to endow this child. The charming and piquant face, the provocative walk, the challenging dress sense. Who, I wondered, does this exotic flame burn for?



"I was getting ready for bed when I remembered it.

The hinges were of old brass, bright with polishing, and their flanges spread over the wood in long tongues. I was determined to investigate that chest, there might even be a secret drawer!

Voices below, drew me to the window. The upper floor, where I was, jutted out as in many old Elizabethan houses. I felt sure that the outside would be half-timbered, like the lovely black-and-white buildings that you see in Cheshire, along the Welsh border. I opened the casement to look.

The garden was prettily laid out, with a pool and an arbour. In summer, no doubt, there would be little tables and bright umbrellas. A loose stone wall divided it from the kitchen garden, where a man was working. Beyond, a tiny mountain stream chattered over the stones, brown in the pools and greenish-white where the water broke. The air was thick with mist, and chilly. I watched the man bring a barrow-load of potatoes from the clamp, and a woman began washing them at the pump. Below me was the kitchen, and on the flagged pavement before it were two girls plucking geese and a large turkey. A cat was chasing the flying feathers. They were all talking to each other in Welsh. Then an older woman came out and scolded them. Her face was familiar, somehow, but lined and creased with sorrow. The world had not been kind to her. In fact, I don't think I had ever seen anyone quite so steeped in sorrow.

I went quickly to the dressing-table. It was not there!"

The girls didn't look up at her, but the older woman did. I have seldom seen a more venomous expression flood over a face. Fury, bitterness, contempt; they were all there. Without a word the old lady turned heavily and went in beneath my window.

The girl paused, hand on hip, showing to perfection the line of her bosom. She glanced round, and then up at me. Her look seemed at first somehow communicative, and then she grinned. An impudent dimple, flashing teeth, a sparkle of dangling ear-bobs, and it seemed as though she'd known me all my life. Then, with a mischievous glance at me, she grimaced, like a rude child, towards the kitchen. I could have spanked her, and then given her a good kiss!

With superb nonchalance, she strolled away; not lending a hand, nor speaking a word to the other girls.

The mist was chilly, and I closed the window. Well, well! I thought, there's a packet of trouble for someone! But I felt exhilarated. The girl, with her casual dress, was obviously staying in the house, though hardly the "guest" class. Perhaps I should see more of her. She looked good fun; and devastatingly friendly.

I did catch glimpses of her during the next few days, but only from a distance. One evening she was leaning on the bar, still dressed in those outrageously sophisticated clothes; and another time I saw her peeping

through the passage window into the "Snug." After the men, no doubt. That might mean trouble, for she wore a wedding ring.

Christmas was going to be difficult for me. My tragedy was too recent for me to join in the festivities with a good grace. That afternoon I went for a long walk. In thick brogues and a raincoat I tramped the sodden moorland grass. I crushed through little stone stiles, and sheep stampeded, bleating, from my path. A white cloud lay low, in the upper end of the valley. I fought my way through it, and then, beyond, slid down the slippery bed of a tiny rill into watery sunshine.

But the real me was half a world away. My body was soaked, not with Welsh hill mist, but with perspiration. My white drill tropical uniform stuck to my back. It was the only thing I was wearing. Dacoits, as the local terrorists are called, had made a bad raid. Plenty of wounded were coming in; some were our own troops, and there were many natives, both civilians and armed bands.

The doctor had to go on operating long after nightfall. Have you ever seen a lamp alight in a tropical dusk? All the insects that swarm at night, whether it is peace or war, fly to the light and create a huge battlefield round it. In the tropics, you sit as far away from the light as you can; and a servant comes periodically and sweeps up a squirming mass of creatures wriggling revoltingly. Some are poisonous, some just predatory.

But in the little field hospital we had established, the table had to be under the light. One of my duties was to keep the doctor, and the patient—and the wound—free from insects. That, in addition to the duties of theatre sister and ward sister, for I was the only nurse left.

That afternoon they had brought in my Robert. One leg had to be taken off at once. He clutched me painfully until the anaesthetic relaxed his hold. But there was no gentle anaesthetic for me. We had only met the week before. We had only kissed once. He was my first and only love. At last, after thirty-five years, someone wanted me. Our tastes matched; our backgrounds were similar; but, above all, we loved, on my part, and I believe on his too, completely and entirely. All my body and mind surged towards his, and years of frustration melted away in the peace and safety of his arms.

He died under my eyes. I watched his life ebb. I watched him while my hands were occupied with the next case—and the next, and the next. I watched mosquitoes settle on him, while I brushed them off the doctor and lifted them with forceps from the last incision he had made. Robert lay against the wall of the tent, and I worked under the light. How many hours we were there I do not know. Case after case had been lifted on to the table and lifted off again, and I could not go to him. The doctor's incessant "Forceps, Nurse!" and "Clips, more clips!" and when I turned again Robert was dead.

As I counted swabs and held basins, I saw them prepare the body for its necessarily swift burial. I saw them pad the wounds we had not had time to dress. I picked insects out of eyes, nose and mouth. When I turned and saw that the stretcher by the wall of the tent was empty, I fainted.

But life came back to me. It was the stiff whisky I drank that earned me the decoration, nothing else. Life came back to me in a way, but it would have been easier had I died. Once a kiss has been received and given it is hard to forget the taste. Once the body has been promised its fulfilment it is hard to take back the word.

After the political crisis was over, I nursed very badly. I forgot instructions and muddled the records. When I found I was grudging life to those of my patients who were recovering, I resigned.

Up here on the mountain, the wind blew hair in my eyes and there it stuck. My face was wet with tears as well as rain.

"It's over!" I kept telling myself. "You're through. He is in his grave. You can't have him. You must sublimate your passion. Try adopting a child." And then my body would ache, and I would lean against the wind. "I want him! He is mine. Why can't I see him again! Just once!"

I must have walked in a circle, because I saw the village below me. Strangely enough, I felt better for my emotional storm. I was more relaxed. I had seen how impossible was my repining, how dangerous the indulgence in misery. I looked for a fresh line of approach to my problem.

The sky had cleared, too, and the sun was setting in a glow of rosy light. The mountain-tops were clear-cut, and an early star glittered in the heavens. It was going to be frosty.

The lounge was gay with decorations. Great bunches of evergreens, tied with red, hung on the walls. My tea was brought to a cosy chair by the fire. A lonely tea, of course, but good in its way. Hugh Aphorpe came in as I drank it.

"Miss Marchant," he began, "I've taken the liberty of having your things moved. I think you'll find everything in order." He smiled quickly, and I thought he looked tired and strained. "Tell me if you want anything. I think you'll like your new room."

"I'm sure I shall," I replied. "What else could I say! There is so much unhappiness in the world, why not make things easier for people when you can."

"Don't work too hard," I pleaded, "or I shall have to come and nurse you!"

"There's nothing I should like better!" he answered gallantly.

I thought to myself, he's not lived all his life in a Welsh village, there's something to him. All the same, he's worried or upset. I wonder why?

My new room (though a very old one) was welcoming. A bright fire burned in the wide chimney, and tiny answering fires danced in the mirrors, and on the old toilet china covered with roses. The dark press, a mere black shadow in a dark corner, had little gleams of fire on the carved faces and spreading hinges. Through the half-open window, behind the chintz curtains, I heard the musical voices of the kitchen girls, and occasionally the scolding tone of the older woman.

I had an hour before dinner, and I remembered my plan to examine the old press, so, carrying the oil lamp across the room, I set it down and ran my fingers over the deeply incised carving and stroked the smooth moulding, enjoying the satiny feel of the patina. When I had been in the room before, there had been some photographs on the top of the chest, but now they had been swept away and a freshly laundered cloth was spread with the few books I had collected. It was the sort of piece that might have a secret drawer. I fingered the pillars at the corners, but they didn't move; nor was there a knob of any sort at the sides. Sometimes, if you pull a button or knob, it releases a drawer in the thickness of the backboard.

No, I thought, the only way to tell is to pull out the drawers and see if one is shorter than the others; and without thinking, I pulled at a carved face. It was the top drawer, and it slid open easily. At the sight of someone else's possessions I realised what I was doing. I hate a pryer. But the top things lying there were the photographs, and as they had been ranged out at my first visit, I didn't think it would matter if I glanced at them again. Nor were they likely to hold my interest. Family photographs, of someone else's family, are not very thrilling. There was one of the old lady whom I had seen scolding the girls. She was younger and happier in the picture, and the two boys beside her were obviously her sons. There was another of the sons, grown up, one sitting with the hand of the other on his shoulder. In spite of the wooden expression such a pose induces, I could see that one was Hugh.

So Hugh has a brother, I mused. I wonder where he is?

I took up another photograph, a wedding group and more recent. The bride's face I knew! It was the little minx in the polo-necked sweater and jeans, and the groom was Hugh's brother, and Hugh was best man.

So that's where young Madam comes in, I thought, and she doesn't hit it off with mama-in-law. And no wonder, she's right off the beat.

The stolid, good country people standing round the bride looked what they were, plain and honest. She looked to be neither! Her beauty was brilliant, but she looked secretive and mischievous, like the cat that has got the cream and not yet been found out. In a larger photograph of the bride and groom alone, my suspicions were deepened. They say nurses can tell even before the mothers themselves! Maybe I was wrong, but the girl looked such an imp, she was quite capable of doing it. There she was, as sweet as they come, and she was enjoying making a fool out of a good man. Of course a girl with looks like that must have been pestered a lot. Perhaps she had bad parents, or even none at all! Anyway, she was brimming with vitality, good or bad!

Dinner was not a success. The old cook, whom I now knew to be Mrs. Aphorpe, was upset. More than once her strained, lined, old face peered round the serving screen. She had certainly aged since the wedding. The potatoes were burned, the bird was underdone, and the service was slow. But no new guest had arrived, so perhaps they really had moved me because of the noise.

I stayed a while over my coffee, chatting to the few other residents, and it was striking ten as I passed the clock on the stairs. The fire in my room was dull. I was getting ready for bed when I remembered it. I went quickly to the dressing-table. It was not there! They had not brought it with my other things. You may think me foolish, but it was the only thing I had of Robert's. Most girls would have a photograph or a gift. I had nothing but a button I had stolen from his uniform as his effects were being put together after his death. I kept it on a little tray on my dressing-table. It was very precious.

Slipping on a wrap, I went to my former room. A light showed under the door. I tapped. There was a cheerful "Come in!"

The room had been changed, and a double bed put up, and sitting on the side of it was the young bride, lovelier than ever, at close range.

"Hallo!" she said, "I knew you'd come!" She was a Cockney. Limehouse, not Tiger Bay.

"Do sit down, dear," she said. "I'm so lonely!" She kicked off her high-heeled shoes and lit a cigarette.

I found my button.

"That your boy friend's?" she enquired pertly. "Tell me about him."

"He's dead," I said.

"Oh! How?" she cried anxiously.

"It was in the war."

She smiled. "You get yourself another. It'll do you no end of good!" she advised, "it'll smarten you up, take you out of yourself! A girl ought always to have someone in view. Then if he lets you down, you can go on to the next!" and she giggled. "But, mind you," she went on seriously, "only one at a time! Don't try running two at once, it doesn't pay!" I changed the subject.

"You don't belong here?" I asked.

"Not on your life!" The scorn was biting. "No, I just come now and again, like. It annoys them! See?"

"Then why—" I began, and stopped. Somehow she guessed what I was thinking.

"Why did they turn you out for me?" She laughed. Then she looked solemn. "This room has a ghost in it!" she said, and looked slyly to see how I took this.

"Rubbish!" I exclaimed. "Don't be silly! As you're one of the family they wanted the best room for you and your husband. It's natural."

She came and stood by me, frowning in her earnestness. "I tell you it's the ghost!" she affirmed. "You must believe me!" Her eyes were bright with unshed tears. "They don't want me to have this room! They hate me! And I hate them!" and she stamped her foot.

I put out a hand. "There," I said, "don't get upset!"

"You'll stay with me?" she pleaded, and again came the sly, sideways glance.



" 'No !' she spoke heavily. Her arms were crossed to grab her sweater and pull it over her head. 'No. He was killed on purpose !'"

"Of course, if you want me to," I said. (At once Hugh's anxious face came into my mind.) "But what about your husband. Is he here ?" "No !" she said, and pouted.

"Is he coming ?"

"No !" she repeated. "He's dead !" She wasn't sad, only bitter.

"I'm sorry," I said softly. "What happened ? Was he ill ?"

After I had promised to stay with her she began to undress, like a child, with no self-consciousness. She loosened her jeans and stepped out of them, revealing the briefest of panties.

"No !" she said slowly, holding my eyes with hers. "No, he was killed !"

I felt a great wave of pity for her.

"Oh, I'm so sorry ! Was it an accident ? Or, he wasn't killed—in the war—was he ?"

"No !" she spoke heavily. Her arms were crossed to grab her sweater and pull it over her head. "No. He was killed on purpose !"

"On purpose ?"

"He was hanged !". Her face was dark with anger. The taut honey-coloured body was rigid, naked but for the frivolous pants and a wisp of bra. Round the neck was a pad. It had been hidden by the high neck of her sweater.

I went icy cold ! My mouth was dry ! I had seen that kind of pad before ! I tried to put my nerveless hands up before my eyes.

"No !" I cried hoarsely, as her fingers went to her throat. "Don't ! Don't take it off." Perhaps my lips made no sound. The pad came away in her hand. Oh, her throat ! Her poor, pretty throat ! So that was why they hanged him !

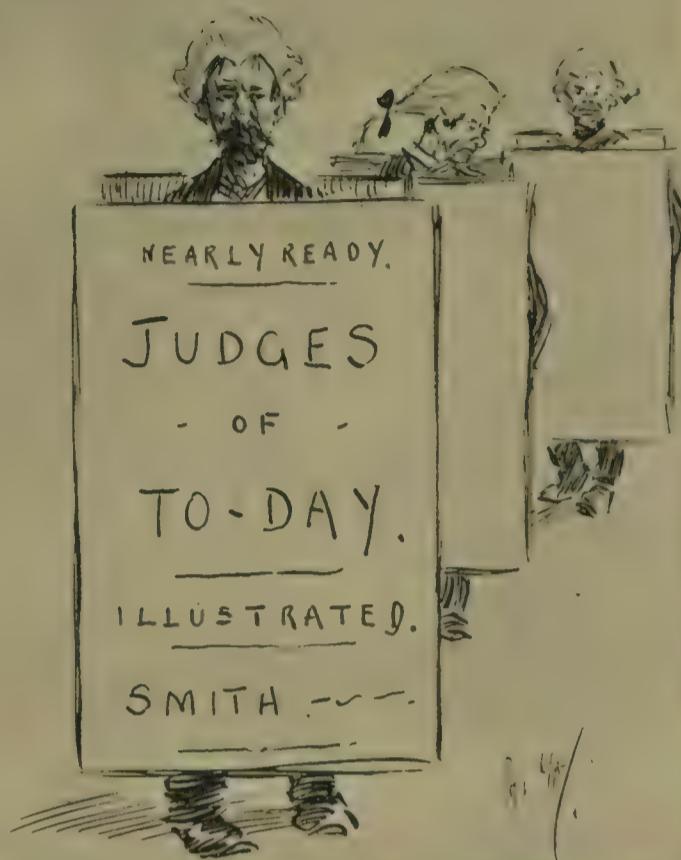
THE END.



LONDON TYPES OF HALF A CENTURY AGO: REVEALING GLIMPSES BY THAT GREAT PEN ARTIST—PHIL MAY.

Young or old, thin or fat, all these figures could only be Londoners. Drawn with the superb economy of line of the inimitable Phil May, they show that though costume and customs may have changed, the essential character of the genuine Londoner remains the same to-day as it was at the turn of the

century. Born near Sheffield in 1864, Phil May set out for London in 1882, and with the exception of an interlude in Australia and Paris, he spent the remainder of his life in London, where he died in 1903, having found constant inspiration in the people he saw around him in the great city.



LONDON TYPES OF HALF A CENTURY AGO : PHIL MAY'S PEN SKETCHES OF STREET CHARACTERS.

"Temptation" at the hands of "My Fair Lady"—speaking, no doubt, in the Cockney voice that shocked Professor Higgins; the intriguing messages of the sandwich-boards—in one case obviously to be ignored; and the piercing notes of the pitiful young singers; all these, and many other such features,

were part of the London streets of half a century ago. Here they have been superbly recorded for us by the gifted pen of Phil May. To-day, alas, the streets of London have lost most of these characters, and one only rarely espies their kind through the endless stream of roaring traffic.



SUNDAY SNOWBALLS FOR THE FOUNDER OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS: A THAMES EMBANKMENT SCENE DRAWN BY PHIL MAY.

"Sunday in the Embankment Gardens. Time, 2.45 p.m. 1st Urchin: 'Come on, Billy—it's schooltime.' 2nd Urchin: 'Let's give him another first!' (They snowball statue vigorously, and *exeunt*.)" Published in *Punch* at Christmas-time in 1902, this Phil May drawing shows a statue still familiar to Londoners to-day. 'Erected in 1880 "under the direction of the Sunday School Union by contributions from Teachers and Scholars of Sunday Schools in Great Britain," it commemorates Robert Raikes (1735-1811), "Founder

of Sunday Schools 1780." Sculpted by Thomas Brock, this impressive statue stands in the Victoria Embankment Gardens, close to the Savoy Hotel. Robert Raikes was born in Gloucester, where his father had founded and made a considerable success of the *Gloucester Journal*, which Robert took over on his death in 1757. Though Robert Raikes was certainly not the absolute originator of the idea of Sunday Schools, his active interest in them, and his use of his paper on their behalf, was largely responsible for their development.



WITH TWO OF THEIR COMRADES AND A MONKEY AS CRITICS: BOYS WRESTLING AND SEESAWING—A LIVELY PAINTING BY GOYA.



"SEE THE CONQUERING HERO COMES": BOYS PLAYING AT SOLDIERS IN ANOTHER PAINTING BY THE SPANISH ARTIST FRANCISCO JOSE GOYA (1746-1828).

BOYS AT PLAY: GOYA CAPTURES THE IMAGINATION AND PUGNACITY OF CHILDREN'S GAMES.

"Of all people children are the most imaginative," wrote Lord Macaulay, and it is in their games that children can most happily give reign to their rich imaginations. If, however, we agree with Dean Inge that "games are the best safety-valve for the spirit of mere pugnacity"

we will not be surprised that so often, especially among boys, play will easily develop into fighting. Both these elements of playing have been skilfully represented in these two small paintings by Goya, which were included in the Manchester Art Treasures Centenary Exhibition.

Reproduced by courtesy of Mrs. John Maxwell-Macdonald, Pollok House, Glasgow, where they are to be seen during the summer months.



THE DEATH OF THE CENTAUR NESSUS, SLAIN BY HERCULES, WHO HAS THEREBY SIGNED HIS OWN DEATH-WARRANT. BEHIND STANDS THE BEAUTIFUL DEIANEIRA, WHO WILL WEAVE THE FATAL SHIRT DYED IN NESSUS'S BLOOD. (POMPEII.)



ON THE SHORES OF TYRE, EUROPA, CADMUS' SISTER, AND HER MAIDENS PLAY WITH THE WHITE BULL WHICH HAS APPEARED AMONG THEIR CATTLE, BUT THE BULL IS JUPITER IN DISGUISE, ABOUT TO CARRY EUROPA OFF. (POMPEII.)



A CARAVAGGIO-LIKE PAINTING AND FAR THE FINEST ARTISTICALLY OF THOSE WE REPRODUCE: CHIRON THE CENTAUR, THE GREAT EDUCATOR OF ANTIQUITY, INSTRUCTING THE YOUTHFUL ACHILLES IN PLAYING THE LYRE. (HERCULANEUM.)

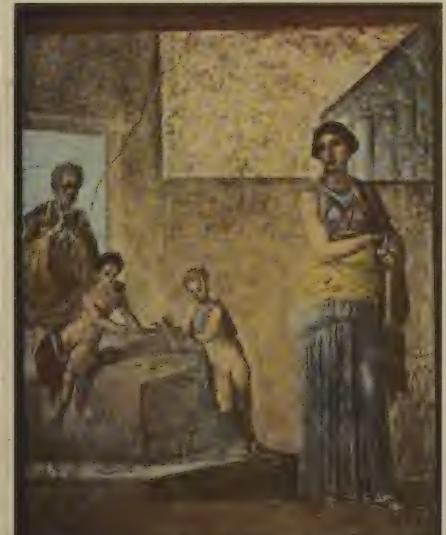


ONE OF ANTIQUITY'S MOST MOVING STORIES: ADMETUS MUST DIE, UNLESS SOMEONE WILL DIE FOR HIM. HIS PARENTS DECLINE TO SACRIFICE THEIR LIVES, BUT ALCESTIS, HIS YOUNG WIFE, OFFERS HERSELF. (HERCULANEUM.) ("Hercules and Nessus," reproduced by permission from Paul Herrmann's "Denkmäler der

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY: GREEK TALES BY ROMAN ARTISTS.



AS OLD PELIAS SACRIFICES ON THE SEASHORE AT IOCUS, THE STRANGER WITH ONLY ONE SANDAL APPEARS, AND IS REVEALED AS PELIAS'S NEPHEW JASON. FROM THIS INCIDENT STARTS THE QUEST OF THE ARGO. (POMPEII.)



MEDEA, THE CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF MAGIC, MADDENED BY JEALOUSY, DECIDES THAT SHE WILL KILL HER TWO CHILDREN, WHEN NOTHING ELSE, IT SEEMS, CAN SUFFICIENTLY PUNISH THE UNFAITHFUL JASON. (POMPEII.)



RETURNING FROM KILLING THE GORGON MEDUSA, WHOSE DECAPITATED HEAD HE STOLE, PERSEUS SEES ANDROMEDA CHAINED TO A ROCK IN THE SEA AND SOON TO BE DEVOURED BY A SEA MONSTER. HE FALLS IN LOVE WITH THE MAIDEN, SLAYS THE MONSTER AND CARRIES OFF ANDROMEDA AS HIS BRIDE. (POMPEII.)



THE HERO EARLY SHOWS HIS STRENGTH: THE EIGHT-MONTH-OLD HERCULES STRANGLES THE TWO SNAKES WHICH JUNO HAS SENT TO KILL HIM. ON THE RIGHT ARE ALCMENA, HIS MOTHER, AND HER HUSBAND, AMPHITRYON. (POMPEII.)

Every picture tells a story—or used to ; and certainly those Roman paintings of the first century A.D. which were preserved so miraculously by the volcanic ash which overwhelmed and buried Pompeii and Herculaneum, were no exceptions. Some, it is true, were more in the nature of architectural decorations designed to adorn and to hint that an ordinary room was like some chamber of a palace; and some, like the moving series in the House of the Mysteries at Pompeii, were truly religious in intention; but the majority, like those we have selected, were

[Continued opposite.]

commissioned and carried out to "point a moral—not necessarily an estimable one—and adorn a tale." All are drawn from that great store of legend and the classical myths of the gods and heroes of ancient Greece. All the stories occur in every picture, but the different poet—his patron; and all are linked one with another. Jupiter is the lover of Europa, as well as the father of both Hercules and Perseus, by different mortal mothers. Chiron, the King of the Centaurs, is the teacher of both Achilles and Hercules. Hercules, as well as Jason, went on that quest for the Golden Fleece, which left Jason with the doubtful blessing of Medea; and it was, of course, Hercules who rescued Alcestis from Hell.

A FLORENTINE LOVE-STORY OF THE '80s:

IN SIX
CHARMING
SKETCHES
BY
RANDOLPH
CALDECOTT.



MR. OAKBALL HAS BEEN SENT TO FLORENCE BY HIS MOTHER, TO CURE HIS LOW SPIRITS AND LOSS OF APPETITE, WITH LITTLE SUCCESS—UNTIL WE COME ON HIM IN THE UFFIZI, DEEPLY INTERESTED IN THE COPYING OF A PICTURE.



(Right.)
AND AT A FANCY DRESS BALL AT THE PALAZZO VIOLINI AT WHICH OAK-BALL HAD SHONE WITH TRUE BRITISH LUSTRE HE DISCOVERED THE PICTURE COPYIST IN THE GARB OF A GOOSE-GIRL...



... BUT BEFORE HE HAD HAD ENOUGH OF HER DELIGHTFUL CONVERSATION SHE WAS LED OFF INTO THE SAFETY OF THE FAMILY BY A GRIM OLD GENTLEMAN IN THE ROBES OF OLD ROME.



BUT AT LAST HE HAD A SERIOUS INTERVIEW WITH THE GRIM OLD GENTLEMAN AND THE SIGNORA, HIS WIFE—AN AMERICAN LADY—PARENTS OF THE GOOSE-GIRL. THEY, ON BEING ASSURED OF THE STABILITY OF HIS INCOME, ACCEPTED HIM AS A SON-IN-LAW...



... AND AFTER THIS HIS INTEREST IN ART GREW AND HE SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME IN THE GALLERIES, STUDYING PICTURES, AND THE COPYIST.



WITH THE PROSPECT OF A HAPPY AND DELICIOUS FUTURE, WHEN HE CAN HAVE PICTURES COPIED AS OFTEN AS HE MAY WISH, HE RECOVERED HIS SPIRITS AND GAVE HIS LAST BACHELOR'S PARTY.

RANDOLPH CALDECOTT, who was born (at Chester) in 1846 and died (in Florida) in 1886, began as a professional artist when he was twenty-six. In the rest of his short life, he established himself as one of the most popular and delightful of illustrators of the mid-Victorian period. Perhaps his most enchanting work was as illustrator of nursery-rhymes and there must still be many nurseries where the "Caldecott books" are still studied with care and affection. He was likewise adept at contemporary humour, as witness these delightful sketches, reproduced from the original water-colours by permission of P. and D. Colnaghi and Co., Ltd.

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BEAUTY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE : "HEAD OF A YOUNG WOMAN," BY FRANÇOIS BOUCHER (1703-1770).

The grace and charm of François Boucher's drawings is delightfully illustrated in this fine example from a French collection, which was in the Exhibition of "French Master Drawings of the 18th Century," at the Matthiesen Gallery, in 1950. Boucher was born in Paris, where he studied

under F. le Moine. In about 1727 he went to Rome, and on returning to Paris in 1731 he gained a wide reputation, and became the favourite painter of Madame de Pompadour, and Director of the Académie. (Chalk, heightened with white: 9 by 6½ ins.) (Reproduced by courtesy of Messrs. Cailleux, Paris.)



THE PICTURE OF THE YEAR HALF A CENTURY AGO: FRANK CRAIG'S MOVING MASTER-PIECE OF FRANCE'S NATIONAL HEROINE—THE MAID OF ORLEANS—RIDING INTO BATTLE.

"The Maid with her banner of snow" has long provided inspiration for poets, writers and artists. Bernard Shaw, whose great play "Saint Joan" was first produced in London in 1924, said: "She is the incomparable Warrior Saint in the Christian calendar, the queenly, fair, unerring, the most heroic worthies of the Middle Ages." Sir Winston Churchill has described her as "a being so uplifted from the ordinary run of mankind that she finds no equal in a thousand years . . . she embodied the natural goodness and valour of the human race in unexampled perfection." In 1907, just thirteen years before

the Maid was canonised as St. Jeanne d'Arc, the picture of the year at the Summer Exhibition of the Royal Academy in London was this colourful masterpiece of Frank Craig's (1874-1918) entitled "The Maid". This much-admired picture, which was exhibited in the Royal Academy for £1,000, was subsequently purchased by the French Government and is still in Paris. It shows "the Maid who rides for France" clad in her white armour leading the French forces into battle, her gleaming standard raised high, as the arrows of the English archers fly towards their targets. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris.)



"A LADY WITH A FAN," BY JEAN-MICHEL MOREAU LE JEUNE (1741-1814). SIGNED AND DATED 1775, THIS IS A SKETCH FOR A FIGURE IN ONE OF THE COMPOSITIONS IN THE ARTIST'S WELL-KNOWN "MONUMENT DU COSTUME."

(Red, black and white chalks on brown paper: 10½ by 9½ ins.)



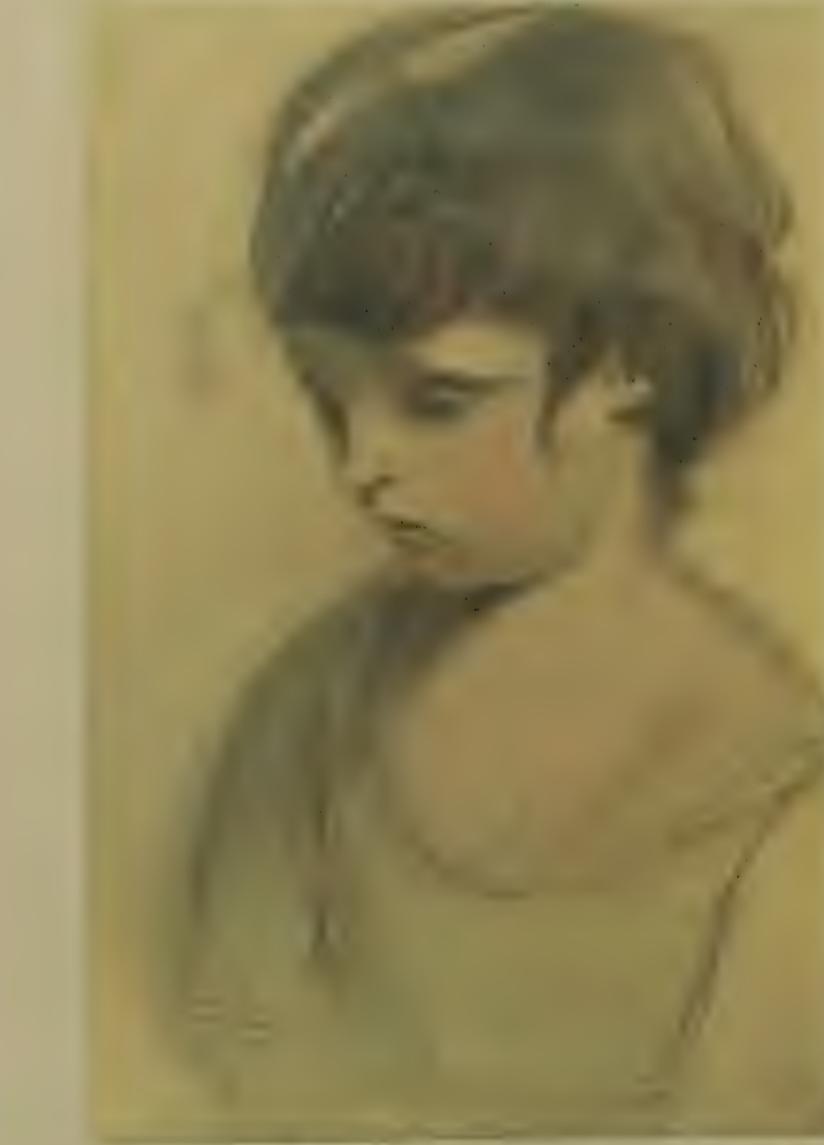
"A LADY UNRAVELLING THREAD": ANOTHER DRAWING FOR HIS "MONUMENT DU COSTUME," BY MOREAU LE JEUNE. BOTH DRAWINGS WERE IN THE 1954-55 ROYAL ACADEMY WINTER EXHIBITION—"EUROPEAN MASTERS OF THE 18TH CENTURY."

(Red, black and white chalks on brown paper: 10½ by 9½ ins.)



"A GIRL WITH A DOG": A DRAWING BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS (1723-1792), OF THE SAME LITTLE GIRL AS THE ONE SITTING FOR HER PORTRAIT IN "THE INFANT ACADEMY."

(Coloured chalks: 12½ by 8½ ins.) (Reproduced by courtesy of A. D. Pilkington, Esq.)



"PORTRAIT STUDY OF MISS THEOPHILA GWATKIN FOR THE PICTURE CALLED 'LESBIA': REYNOLDS' DRAWING OF THE DAUGHTER OF HIS FAVOURITE NIECE. (Pastel: 18 by 12 ins.) (Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)

FRENCH ELEGANCE AND ENGLISH INNOCENCE: FINE DRAWINGS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

There is a charming contrast between the demure elegance of Jean-Michel Moreau's fashionable ladies and the delightful air of childish innocence of the two little girls so freshly drawn by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Both artists belong to the golden years of the eighteenth century, and both spent much of their time painting or drawing the "fair ladies" of their day. While

Reynolds was the foremost portrait painter of his generation, Jean-Michel Moreau le Jeune was almost exclusively a draughtsman, and his modish drawings of fashionable ladies gained him widespread recognition. In 1770 he was appointed *Dessinateur des menus plaisirs* to Louis XV, and five years later *Dessinateur du Cabinet du Roi* to Louis XVI.

SKATING ON THE SERPENTINE: 18TH-CENTURY LONDON WINTER SCENES.



(Above.)

"SKATING IN HYDE PARK": A WATER-COLOUR BY JULIUS CAESAR IBBETSON (1759-1817).

(Reproduced by courtesy of Alan D. Pilkington, Esq.)

SKATING, according to a nineteenth-century authority, "is not only an animated and cheerful exercise, but susceptible of many demonstrations which may be called elegant." For centuries it has been a popular winter pastime in London, and an early history tells us that in the twelfth century young men using primitive bone skates raced along the ice. With the advent of iron skates—brought back from their exile in Holland by the Royalists—Royalty and noblemen indulged in this "very pretty arte," as Samuel Pepys called it. The Serpentine has long been one of the favourite resorts for London's skaters, as these two scenes show.

(Right.)

"SKATING ON THE SERPENTINE": A PAINTING BY PHILIPPE DE LOUTHERBOURG (1740-1812).



CARDS THAT THE "MARTYR KING" MAY HAVE PLAYED WITH:

FROM A FINE PACK MADE FOR PRESENTATION TO CHARLES I.



BEAUTIFULLY DECORATED WITH FLOWERS, SNAKES AND PARROTS: SILK

In former centuries it was a universal custom to play at least a few games of cards at Christmastime. Indeed, a statute of Henry VIII's reign forbade card-playing except during the Christmas holidays. Though it is not known exactly where or when playing-cards as we know them originated, it is certain that they

were widely used in Europe by the fifteenth century. The first Government duty levied on playing-cards in this country was introduced in 1615, when James I declared that the art of making them had been perfected. In 1628 his son, Charles I, granted a Charter for the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing

These cards are reproduced by courtesy of the Eccllesia Galleries, London, S.W.1.

INLAID CARDS FROM A 17TH-CENTURY ENGLISH PACK MADE FOR A KING.

Cards. It is thought that the magnificent pack of fifty-two silk inlaid cards, from which a selection is shown here, was made for presentation to the King on that occasion. These cards, which were once in the collection of Sir Henry Irving, were included in a fascinating exhibition of playing-cards arranged by

Messrs. Thomas de la Rue on the occasion of the first International Conference of Playing-Card Manufacturers held in London in October, 1957. The cards were accompanied by twenty-six sixteenth-century silver counters bearing portraits of English sovereigns from William the Conqueror to Charles I.



MERRY-MAKING IN FLANDERS: "THE VILLAGE FETE AT AUDENARDE"—A GAY PAINTING OF 1602 BY DAVID VINCKBOONS (1576-1629). (Oil on canvas: 50 by 79 ins.)
Reproduced by courtesy of H. Terry-Engell, 8, Bury Street, St. James's.



HIGH SPIRITS IN ENGLAND: "ENGLISH MERRY-MAKING IN THE OLDEN TIMES," PAINTED BY W. P. FRITH, R.A. (1819-1909), IN 1847. (Oil on canvas: 44½ by 73 ins.)
Reproduced by courtesy of Sir Richard Proby, Bt., Elton Hall, Peterborough.

CONTRASTING WITH INDOOR REVELRIES AT CHRISTMAS: SCENES OF OUTDOOR MERRY-MAKING IN SUMMERTIME.

"A man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry." Thus the Old Testament in the Book of Ecclesiastes sums up an essential characteristic of mankind which has inspired the artists of these two paintings. There is a fascinating contrast between the vivid joviality of the fête in his native Flanders, painted by David Vinckboons at the beginning of

the seventeenth century, and the rather nostalgic English village scene of "Olden Times," painted by William Powell Frith nearly two-and-a-half centuries later. Both paintings, however, give a wonderful impression of high spirits and merriment outdoors on a fine summer's day—the sort of merry-making that is, perhaps, only equalled by the joyous indoor celebrations at Christmastime.



LETTER TO SANTA CLAUS

By BETH DUTTON.

© 1958. BETH DUTTON.

Illustrations by GORDON NICOLL, R.I.

JILL took the silver swan off the Christmas tree, and stooped to put it gently beside the other ornaments she had laid on the blue carpet. Her eyes lingered on its shiny elegance and then lifted to the tip of the tall spruce, where the star glistened.

That was the only decoration left on the tree, in this odd procedure of taking off the trimmings on Christmas Eve, and Jill raised her hand towards it, then changed her mind. Let it stay. She had noticed Dan giving it a little pat after he finished putting it up.

At that moment she heard him come in the front door.

"Darling!" she called, all the welcome in the world in her voice. "Merry Christmas!"

"Merry Christmas!" There was a slight pause. "But it isn't me. It's the big bad wolf. Or anyone else who might walk in with the door ajar."

"Oh, sweetheart!" Jill skirted the gleaming, brittle cloud of colour at her feet, and ran to the foyer. "Was it really open?"

Dan Stuart held out his hands. "Look, no key! Yet here I am!"

Jill beamed at him. "And a nicer wolf I have yet to see." She lifted her face cosily.

Dan accepted the invitation with pleasure and his usual thoroughness. Then he put his gloves and a rather nondescript package on the table. "I should have scolded you before I kissed you," he muttered. "Now it's harder. Mrs. Stuart! Madam! Will you please never, never, never leave the door ajar? In a huge apartment house like this—with strangers coming and going along the halls! You scare me half to death."

"Fussy!" Jill grinned at him. "After all, look who came in."

"Yes," Dan granted, "this time. But—"

"All right, darling. I'll never, never, never do it again. Oh, Dan, I have so much to tell you! Heaps more cards have come, and more presents, and it's all so exciting! Then—oh, honey, don't put your coat away! We have a little errand to do."

"We have? I thought we were going to stick around here to-night. I bought the lights and I want to string them on the— Hey!" He stared incredulously at the dismantled tree. "What goes on here?"

"A surprise! Something terribly nice. Something you'd never guess in a trillion years!" In her quick, dragon-fly way, Jill knelt beside the ornaments and started putting them in the carton that stood empty nearby. "Want to give me a hand with these while I explain?"

"But—I don't get it!" Dan made no move to help. "I never heard of such a thing as stripping the tree on Christmas Eve!"

"It is different, isn't it?" Jill agreed brightly. "You know, I thought the easiest way to carry the things would be in a carton."

"Carry them!" Dan said blankly. "Where to?"

"Not far," murmured Jill, suddenly enchanted by a little golden trumpet she had taken up.

"In her quick, dragon-fly way, Jill knelt beside the ornaments and started putting them in the carton that stood empty nearby."

"Now look here," Dan reacted indignantly, "I spent hours putting on those ornaments."

"I know, darling," Jill said, "but, you see, there's a little boy who wants a Christmas tree, and we're going to give it to him."

"Our Christmas tree?"

"No," she smiled, "of course not. We can buy him one. But he has to have decorations for it, and there won't be any pretty ones left in the stores by this time on Christmas Eve."

"Let the kid get his own, then. You don't have to swipe mine."

Jill gave him a brief glance. "Yours?"

"Well—ours," Dan conceded rather stiffly. "Though you didn't spend a whole evening putting them on the tree. Anyway, what little boy?"

"One who wrote a letter to Santa Claus." Jill said it as if she were unfurling a banner.

"Oh, come now, Jill!"

Long ago, Jill had decided that lawyers, even young ones, are sceptical of everything, and she went calmly on, "His name's Peter. He wrote down what he wanted, mailed the letter, and—what do you think? I got it!"

Dan blinked. "You know, I suppose, what happens to people who interfere with the mails?"

"Yep." Jill nodded contentedly. "Gaol."

There was silence.

Jill flicked a glance at Dan, then took up an angel from the floor. "First angel I've ever seen on ice-skates," she said airily, resting it against a reindeer at full gallop in the carton.

Angels were outside Dan's orbit at the moment. "See here, Jill, how did you get that letter?"

"How? Why, darling, hand in hand with Uncle Sam, I took it."

At any time, Dan's thin, solemn face was no thing of beauty, and bafflement did nothing for it.

"Dan-ny!" Jill laughed up at him. "Oh, sweetie, listen; I'm not going to tease you any more. You know how children in poor families write to Santa Claus as their only hope for any Christmas presents? Well, I read in the paper this morning about these letters the postmen find in mailboxes. 'Unless people help to-day,' the paper said, 'many of the pathetic requests will go unanswered.' Unquote. What could I do but dash down to the General Post Office and grab a letter? In all decency, what else could I do?"

"You could, for instance, remember that we've made contributions to a lot of Christmas appeals."

Jill made a face. "What's money?"

"Uh?" Dan said.

"I mean what's money compared to a tree 'with truly needles and a woodsey smell'—that's what the letter said."

"Oh, lord, you would pick a sentimental one like that!"

"I didn't pick it! All the letters were sorted into boroughs, and this was on the very top of Manhattan."

"You could have dug down," Dan brooded, "and found one asking for something uninvolving. A space ship, say. Something a store would have delivered for you. But, no, you come up with a complication like a Christmas tree. Then it has to be complete with trimmings. And now look—my ornaments are gone, and we have all the trouble of getting a tree to the kid."

He started pacing about, as the thing built up in his mind and the picture of a snug first Christmas Eve with his delectable young wife went glimmering.

Jill looked at him out of the corner of her eye. She was on the brink of saying would a cocktail help, when he burst out, "I'll tell you what I think about all these goings-on at Christmas—I think they're overdone. That's what—grossly overdone."

Jill said, quite tartly for her: "That's a nice, stuffy attitude, I must say! For a person who's mad at having his precious Christmas tree touched by hands other than his."

Ignoring her, Dan waved at the flurry of festive colour in every available spot in the room where she had spread the Christmas cards. "So it's attractive," he said, "but think of the mail men going mad! Think of all the frenzy in the stores! And now this Santa Claus letter stunt. It—it—no one has any restraint any more! And, of course, you'd fall for anything."

"Daniel Stuart!" Jill flared. "Are you implying I'm a sap? Because, if you are, then all I can say is there are a lot of wonderful saps in New York. That room at the post-office was packed with people taking Santa Claus letters."

Dan couldn't think of a suitable come-back, so he turned legal and said, "May I see the letter you got?"

"Yes, you may." Jill was as polite as the law itself, but rather more distracting in her sheath-like red wool dress, as she went over to the desk.

"There's undoubtedly a catch in it," Dan said, as he held out his hand for the letter. "Thanks."

"You're welcome," Jill said, an icicle dangling from each word.

Immediately Dan pounced on the address. "See! I told you! There's no poor child at *that* address! Just as I thought—you're being given the run-around."

"Address means nothing," Jill retorted. "Tenements can be right around the corner from the swankiest apartment buildings. You're just selfish. You don't want your planned Christmas Eve interfered with. Also, you're heartless. Every child has a right to a Christmas tree."

"That's not the point. It's you I'm thinking about. I worry about you. You're so impetuous I never know what darn fool thing you'll get mixed up in next, and I can't forever go around picking up the pieces."

Jill had started to put the few remaining ornaments in the carton, and now she stopped with a jerk, her chin going up and up. "I do not do darn fool things!"

"No, of course not," Dan agreed ironically. "You never, for instance, leave the door ajar."

"Oh, that! I'd been to the incinerator-room to get the carton."

Dan brushed off her excuse. "The net result is all that matters. The door was ajar. I'm doing my best to bring home to you the risk in that."

"Well, anyway," Jill snapped back, "you've never had to pick up any pieces."

"I haven't? What about that photographer who came here to take pictures of you and would have gyped you out of fifty dollars if I hadn't gone into quick action?"

Jill made a face. "Those pictures! Were they ghastly! I had on that pretty ballerina dress, too."

"Look, could we just keep to the point? I'm trying to show you you mustn't be so easily swayed."

"That had nothing to do with being swayed. What happened was, when I told the man I didn't want any of his pictures, he shrugged and said, 'Of course, if your husband can't afford to buy them for you . . .'" She paused. "But that was months ago! And now you rake it up and throw it back at me! Maybe if you'd go delving further into your legal mind you could fish up more ways in which I've shown my loyalty to you."

"We're not talking about loyalty to me," Dan said, as worked up now as she was. "In case you've forgotten, the point under discussion is that you are too precipitate, you run risks, fly off at tangents, go overboard about things before investigating. In short," he waved the Santa Claus letter, "you don't look before you leap."

"I'd rather not do that than hesitate and be lost."

With an effort, Dan kept a grip on himself. "Now, let's not be facetious about this, Jill. Just keep to the issue, please."

"In my simple way, I thought the issue was providing a Christmas tree for a little boy who won't have one otherwise."

"How do you know he won't? He's probably a spoiled brat who wants a tree in every room. That address! It's in the next block to one of the snootiest streets on Manhattan."

"This is where we came in!" Jill disgustedly thrust the last ornament into the nearly-full carton and put the lid down. There was an ominous crackling. "Oh-h-h! Now look what you made me do!"

"I made you! You never even asked me if you could take the things off the tree!"

"You weren't here—how could I ask you?"

"You could have waited till I got here."

"All right, you're here, I'll ask you—Dan, my dear, dear husband, there's a little boy who has no ornaments for his tree. Would you mind if we gave him ours? Because if you would, I'll go and buy some ugly old left-overs. Then I'll get a tree and I'll take it and the ornaments to the child and—"

"Nothing I say penetrates!" Dan groaned, throwing out his hands. "All this time and trouble I've taken to warn you about watching your

step, and here you are talking about setting off alone for some dingy, hazardous spot—"

"What happened to the good address?" Jill shot back. Then she stood up quickly. "Listen, Dan, I took that letter from the post-office, and I should think even a lawyer could see I'm stuck with it. A good thing, too," she added, with a couple of sniffs, "because it means at least one person in this town is going to have a nice Christmas."

"Oh, all right, then." Dan could never withstand one sniff, let alone two. "Come on, let's get this wild goose chase over. Put your coat on, and I'll lug the carton to the elevator."

"I'll help you."

It weighed a feather, of course, and Jill laughed.

But Dan was not amused. "Come on, come on! Let's hurry and get back. Our Christmas Eve will be gone before we know it."

"For heaven's sake!" Jill flared up again, "This is our Christmas Eve! We could be having a marvellous time if you weren't such an old stick-in-the-mud, holding on like glue to your preconceived ideas of everything. Always ready to think you're being taken for a ride!"

"It's you who gets taken for the rides!"

"All right, I get taken for rides. Now are you happy? And I'll tell you something else that's going to be taken for a ride—that star on the tree. I was leaving it because you seemed to like it so much, but now—"

"The tree's no good now, anyway. Get your coat and I'll take the wretched star down."

"No! Leave that star alone!"

"But you said—"

"You called it a wretched star, and you're not going to touch it!"

There, in the room gone quiet and wrong, they faced each other, while all trace of Christmas spirit slipped through their fingers.

Finally, Dan said, "Just make up your mind! Take the star for a ride . . . leave it alone . . . will you please make up your mind?"

"I have made up my mind! The star stays where it is. I like it, if you don't. I also like the idea of giving Peter a tree, and, seeing you're against it, I'll take care of it myself. There's food in the refrigerator, and you can bolt the front door and wrap yourself up tight in your people-proof Christmas Eve."

With her grey eyes and auburn hair practically giving off sparks, she was something to behold, but Dan had turned to the window, so he missed the conflagration.

"Lawyer—you!" Jill threw over her shoulder as she flounced out of the room.

"Thanks." Dan put dignity into it, though he had to raise his voice above the tapping of Jill's heels on the polished floor. "You know perfectly well I would never let you go alone on such an expedition. Besides, it's starting to snow, and I don't want you driving on wet streets."

Probably anything he said at that moment would have been wrong, but nothing else would have infuriated Jill so much.

She had a couple of lurid opinions about his over-caution on the road, but, somehow, she managed to keep them to herself. In fact, she said nothing so successfully that, in the elevator, Dan looked down at her rather apprehensively from his vantage point of six feet two.

She was tiny, and he suddenly had the uncomfortable feeling he had been throwing his height around, back there in the apartment. Still, he told himself grimly, someone in the family had to keep their feet on the ground.

Jill caught a glimpse of his face, and had to remind herself quickly that, unless she counteracted his stodginess with a little get-up-and-go, he would soon be so set in his ways that neither he nor anyone around him would breathe.

On a lower floor a young man and a girl carrying brightly-wrapped packages got on, their gay "Merry Christmases" dancing around the elevator and glancing off the gloom of Dan and Jill.

Out of tune with everything, including the snowflakes that nestled trustingly against them, they walked in silence to the car, parked in the next block.

As Dan switched on the ignition, he said, "Where do you want to go for the tree?" His tone was wary, as if he wouldn't put it past Jill, in her present mood, to take off for some distant fir forest.

"Any place," she said, the tingle of Christmas stirring in her again at thought of the trees stacked against impromptu stands on the side-walks, or set up invitingly so that one had to thread one's way through the reaching branches.

They drew near a fruit store with a sideline of trees.

"This'll do," Jill said, and Dan slowed down.

"They look picked over," he said critically. "The next ones may be better."

Jill wondered if he supposed there were any trees for sale on Christmas Eve that hadn't been picked over. And, anyway, what did he care?

When they reached the next store she hopped out fast, so he had no time to point out deficiencies. "I'll only be a minute," she said.

Dan remembered how enthusiastic she had been over the wrong trees when they bought theirs, and he got out too, to lend a little good sense to the transaction.

It was no light matter making a judicious selection, and Jill retired to the car. She might have known he'd fuss over this as he did over everything else.

Then there was the business of tying on the tree without damaging the car's paint. Jill felt a scratch or two would be in a good cause. But in Dan's opinion nothing warranted a scratch, so it was a little while before they set out for the address in the Santa Claus letter.

The block bristled with apartment buildings with their noses in the snowy air, all very canopied, very door-manned, and generally gold-plated.

"Doesn't look too good," Dan said.

Uneasily, Jill murmured, "Three-twenty-one's the number."

That turned out to be the peak of elegance in the block.

Dan stopped the car just beyond the building.

"It can't be right," Jill said, opening her handbag for the letter and peering at the address by the faint dashboard light. "Yes, it is. Three-twenty-one."

There was silence. Finally Dan said, "Let's just go back home."

"We can't." Jill's voice was small, but it was firm. "I took the letter and I'm on my honour to see the thing through. You wait in the car and I'll go up to the apartment."

"I should say not! This is worse than any tenement. Here comes the doorman."

"Sorry, sir, no double parking. Maybe you'll find a space down the street."

But not in that block. Cars were lined up without a break. It seemed miles that Dan had to drive before they saw a station-wagon moving out and they could start the long trudge back to their destination.

They were not exactly a festive pair, with Jill soberly hugging the carton in both arms and Dan glumly hauling the tree and the package of lights he had picked up without comment as they left the apartment.

The doorman offered, in a lofty way, to take the carton from Jill.

"It's all right, thanks," she said, her confidence in the letter in her bag sagging as she saw the large wreaths with spectacular red bows decorating the elaborate lobby. A child in *this* house lacked a tree?

"May I help you?" One of the attendants came forward.

"We want the Craig apartment," Jill said, straightening her shoulders.

"Are you expected, madam?"

"Yes," said Jill, reasoning that the child had written to Santa Claus, so, obviously, someone was expected. But she was careful not to look at Dan. He was such a stickler for the truth.

The house was plush enough to have two banks of elevators, and Dan and Jill were directed to the one which served the Craigs. As they walked towards it along the marble corridor their tree seemed to be shrinking with so much magnificence around.

It wasn't enough that the Craigs should live in such splendour, they even had to occupy a penthouse.

The elevator stopped at the carpeted landing which the Craigs shared with the other penthouse, and the operator showed Dan and Jill which bell to ring.

The door was opened by a youngish man wearing no coat and with his tie loosened. He would have been handsome in an unvarnished sort of way if he hadn't looked harried to distraction. Trying to restrain a huge dog by the scruff of the neck wasn't helping him either.

"Down, Dixie!" he ordered the boxer. Then he saw the Christmas tree. "You have the wrong apartment," he said, quite shortly, and started to close the door.

"Oh, please! Just a minute!" Jill sounded a good deal braver than she felt.

"Look, I'm very busy."

"I'm sorry. We won't keep you. Are you Mr. Craig?"

"Yes."

"This is the tree Peter asked for."

Either the man was slow on the uptake, or his mind was still on whatever it was he had been doing when they rang. He looked at them, his face a blank.

"The tree Peter asked for," Jill repeated.

"Peter has a tree," Mr. Craig said.

"But—"

"Come on, Jill!" Dan had had all he could take.

Jill took no notice. If someone here was playing fast and loose with Santa Claus, she meant to find out about it.

Just how, she wasn't sure. Mr. Craig could have that bleary look from working too hard. Yet again, he could be rather drunk, and Jill didn't always step in where angels feared to tread, whatever Dan might think to the contrary.

Besides, she was scared stiff of the boxer, standing there trigger-taut and even haughtier than the doorman.

As she hesitated, a slight, gentle-faced, grave little boy came to the door, ready for bed, with a robe over his pyjamas.

The instant he saw the Christmas tree a light seemed to go on inside him.

He ran over to Dan and touched the tree and smelled it.

"It's real," he said, still not smiling, but with complete happiness.

Jill relaxed, but just then the boxer sprang away from Mr. Craig's grip and leaped after her young master. She capered gauchely around him for a moment, then reared experimentally into Jill's face.

It was undoubtedly intended as a mark of esteem, but Jill was so frightened she nearly dropped the carton.

"Dan!" she cried.

"She won't hurt you," Dan said, with what Jill considered maddening calm.

Mr. Craig, on the other hand, was thoroughly upset. Though not over Jill's safety.

Grabbing Dixie, he stormed, "Peter! What do you think you're doing—fooling around with that blasted tree?"

Jill knew then it wasn't Santa Claus she needed to worry about, but the little boy.

He looked up at his father. "I'm not fooling around with it. It's my own blasted tree."

"Don't say 'blasted.' Anyway, we've already got a tree—you know that."



"The door was opened by a youngish man wearing no coat and with his tie loosened. He would have been handsome. . . . if he hadn't looked harried to distraction. Trying to restrain a huge dog by the scruff of the neck wasn't helping him either."

Peter shook his head. "That silver, spiky thing isn't a tree! I've never had a real one, so I wrote Santa a letter."

"And he received it," Jill chipped in. "He asked us to deliver the tree. It's his busy night, you know."

"Sure," Peter said matter-of-factly, "that's all right. I didn't ask him to bring it, just send it." He tried to take his treasure in his arms.

"This is the damnedest thing I ever heard of!" Mr. Craig broke in. "There's no sense to it at all!"

"That's what I thought," Dan said stiffly, "till your son explained. I'll put the tree down here."

But that would never do, Jill knew. Mr. Craig probably would leave it there over Christmas.

She made a quick stab at solving the problem. "Oh, Dan, Mr. Craig's so busy!" She turned to Peter's father. "Couldn't we put the tree inside for you?"

He gave no word of thanks, but he did back up against the door, to hold it open.

Jill went in first, edging warily past the dog. "I have lovely decorations in this carton," she said, hoping she didn't sound as silly as she felt.

Peter superintended the easing of the tree through the doorway, embellishing the operation with a couple of excited hops.

He had come so far from his withdrawn state that Jill knew she had to see the thing through. Otherwise, she would certainly have turned tail and run at sight of the marble-floored, marble-columned affair that was the entrance hall. From urn-like lamps came dim illumination, but there was not a glimmer of light beckoning from anywhere beyond.

Dan, unprepared for a mausoleum, and anxious to be out of it said, "I'll put the tree down here."

"Here?" Jill laughed nervously. "Most people like the tree in the living-room. Perhaps Mr. Craig . . ."

Mr. Craig's reaction was to move away from the door and let it shut with a bang. He also released the boxer, and Jill tensed. In the shadowy gloom the animal seemed to her as big as a camel, and she was not used to camels.

"Say where you want the infernal thing put, Peter," Mr. Craig said sharply. "And wait till your mother hears about this!"

Peter considered that prospect, then he said: "Tommy Robinson has his tree near the window and the lights shine in the glass so it looks like two trees." The sombre little face nearly broke into a smile. Not quite, but the nearest there had been to a smile so far. "I'm going to have two trees, too," he said, the whole thing perfectly clear in his mind.

"Okay," Dan said. "Where is the living-room?"

Mr. Craig strode irritably across the echoing floor, and, as he touched a switch, there, on his right, was a decorator's dream of a drawing-room.

Springing into light so suddenly, it made Jill gasp. The décor was modern, very modern, in shades of green, beginning with chartreuse for the carpet. It was rather beautiful, in a startling way, but what struck Jill especially was that there were no personal touches. The long room looked as chill and unloved-in as a display in a store window.

And where was the silver, spiky tree?

There was not so much as a vestige of Christmas. No bright cards, no green, not even a piece of mistletoe.

Peter ran to a french window which apparently opened on a terrace.

"Here!" he said. "My tree's going here!"

Dan started across the deep carpet, looking less out of his element in the formal setting than Mr. Craig did. Even allowing for Mr. Craig's being fit to be tied.

That harassed gentleman turned abruptly to Jill. "Would you mind telling me how in hell you got hold of the kid's letter?"

"Not at all," Jill said pleasantly, though her knees were shaking. "At the post-office. There was a piece in the paper this morning about the Santa Claus letters from under-privileged children." And that, she felt, served him right.

The only effect it had on Mr. Craig was to make him shout, "Look here, Peter, why the devil didn't you tell your mother and me you wanted this kind of a tree?"

"I did!" Peter said absently, absorbed in watching Dan, who, after laying the spruce down, brushed his hands together in a thank-goodness-that's-over gesture.

But he bargained without Jill. There wasn't the slightest doubt in her mind that this character who was the child's father would let the tree go right on lying where it was.

She went towards the window, looking at Peter. "Dan, he's trying to undo the cords. We'd better put the tree up, don't you think?" She placed the carton on the floor. "I'll take out the decorations . . ."

For an instant it seemed as if she would have two exploding men on her hands. Then Dan looked down at Peter struggling with the knots.

"I've got a knife," he said gruffly. "Move over, Peter." Dan set up the tree on its criss-crossed wooden stand.

And suddenly it wasn't the spindly specimen it had seemed downstairs. As the released branches stretched outwards, the tree somehow dwarfed its glamorous surroundings and became the finest thing in the room, filling it with the gentle, magic warmth of Christmas.

Mr. Craig, though, soon took care of that. "Look here, I'm a busy man! I've got a script to finish before I go to bed, and I'll thank you both to get out of here."

For a moment Dan and Jill seemed to hang suspended. Then Jill whispered urgently, "Fix the tree quick, Dan!" and scrambled to her feet to face Mr. Craig with some delaying tactic.

Before she could think of anything he pointed his finger at her. "Now I get it! You're from the Press!"

"T-the Press?" Jill stammered. She wanted to cry out, "Oh, hurry, Dan!"

Mr. Craig glared at her. "Your story's going to be that Peter's a neglected child! I know! That he's never had a Christmas tree, blah, blah, blah! Well, let me tell you, he has! Every year he has a tree! When my wife comes home from her television show to-night, we'll get the damned thing out of the closet, with the other Christmas decorations. I'm telling you, Peter has just as much stuff as other kids! Probably a whole raft more."

Jill's mind was groping. Television—Craig—Francesca Craig!

The devastating Francesca Craig! Morning, noon and night on either television or radio.

And her husband . . .

"Then—then—" Jill gasped, "you must be Toby Craig!" The man without peer among script-writers!

But how could the person who brought forth those perceptive plays be this—this tartar? It must be that the poor creature was frantic with a deadline to meet.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Craig," she said, with real contrition. "We didn't know—"

"Of course you knew! And it's a dirty, sneaking, rotten trick to use the Christmas spirit as a ruse to get inside the place so you can write us up. You got in, sure enough, but—I'm warning you!—one word in print about Peter's Santa Claus letter and I'll sue you! I'll say the whole thing is a put-up job, that you forced yourselves in here and—"

"Just a minute!" Dan stood up. "You admitted us yourself!"

"That's what you say! I'll say it's an unwarranted intrusion, illegal entry—"

"But that isn't true!" Jill protested.

She looked as frightened as she felt, and Dan put his arm reassuringly around her as he gave Mr. Craig glare for glare.

"Go back to the boy, Jill," he said. "I'll take care of this."

She hesitated. If only she'd had the sense just to leave the tree outside! Let them get out of this mess, she pledged, then—

"See!" came Peter's clear voice, and she turned to find him lovingly coaxing the branches down as he had watched Dan do.

He was lost in his Christmas, quite oblivious of the embattled atmosphere and of Dixie standing tensed and with her ears pricked up.

"That's the way to do it," Jill said, going over and kneeling beside him. "The poor things have probably been tied up a long time."

He stroked the branches. "Guess it's like when your foot goes to sleep."

"I guess so. That's fine—you do it beautifully." She spoke absently, because she had one eye on the irate Mr. Craig.

"I happen to be a lawyer," Dan was telling him, "and I was careful not to enter the apartment without your permission."

"I never gave you my permission!"

"Not in so many words, but you did hold open the door for us. And we have Peter's letter to account for our coming. I doubt if you'd find a judge who wouldn't give Santa Claus the right of way."

"You needn't bother to make jokes. I am so unamused you can hear the lack of laughter clattering around."

"You can?" Dan couldn't resist adding, "I'd probably be more talented in that direction if I watched television occasionally."

Jill flinched. "Oh, don't make him madder!" she silently begged.

As if he had heard, Dan stepped on to safer territory. "Seriously, sir, you have nothing to worry about."

"I'll damn well see to that," the unmollified Mr. Craig shot out.

"It's bad enough being pestered in public, but when it comes to people invading my home that's just too much."

"Having established," Dan went legal, "that you held the door open for us, I hardly think 'invading' is the word. However, we certainly have no wish to add to the difficulties of any celebrities in maintaining their



privacy, and if you'd feel more comfortable with your son's Santa Claus letter in your possession, we'd be happy to give it to you. There was never any question of its publication, you understand. And we have no copy of it. We'll hand it over to you, and go our way. And that will be that. Jill, get the letter, will you?"

She jumped up eagerly. Too eagerly.

She knocked against the tree and it tipped over—right on top of Peter. It surprised him so that he tumbled backwards.

Jill clutched at the branches and Dan came striding over, but it was Mr. Craig who got there first.

He drew the tree aside and there sat Peter, with a grin spreading blissfully over his face.

His father's concern changed to bewilderment. "What's funny?" he snapped, yanking the child to his feet.

"It tickled, daddy!"

All the fizz seemed to go out of Mr. Craig suddenly, as if his tiredness had caught up with him. "Well, don't do that again," he muttered. "You scared me."

Jill stared at him. Good heavens, he was human!

Indeed, he looked so undone she had to comfort him quickly. "It's all right, Mr. Craig," she soothed him. "I'm terribly sorry it happened. It was my fault. But it's all right now."

He apparently didn't hear. And there seemed to be nothing else for Jill to say, with him hovering uncertainly around the edge of operations while the tree was being lifted back to its place. With it in position again, Jill thought now they could leave.



"...with a backward look, they slipped away while Peter, in his father's arms, was settling the angel in its new home."

Dan, though, had other ideas. Taking off his overcoat, he settled down to business. "We need twine," he said. "So the tree can be fastened to the piano-leg on one side and that table on the other."

"Here's what was around the branches," Peter offered.

"That's cut." Dan dismissed it, not being one to trifl with a fact.

"Maybe," Mr. Craig's voice sounded strangely tentative, with all the bluster gone from it, "if the stuff was knotted together . . ."

"I don't think it's long enough," Dan said. "But you could try."

Mr. Craig reached for the cord and rather clumsily joined two of the pieces, while Peter looked on. "Will this do?" the father said meekly.

Dan gauged the length with his eye. "I guess so. Now the other pieces."

The job done, he made an announcement.

"The tree," he said, "should be in water."

"My God! is it going to grow?" Mr. Craig was obviously on unfamiliar ground.

"It stays fresher that way," Peter explained.

Dan agreed, then he turned to Mr. Craig. "Have you got some kind of a *jardinier*? A tall one, to raise the tree and leave plenty of space underneath for the presents."

Mr. Craig shook his head. "Peter's had his presents—I gave them to him this morning, so he'd leave me in peace."

"Yes, but I wrapped them up again," Peter said. "To put under the tree when it came."

Somehow it seemed best to Jill and Dan not to look at his father then, and Dan said, rather fast, "Oh, well, it doesn't have to stand in water. One thing is certain, it won't fall over any more. Now for the lights . . ."

They came on, and the tree stood there in glowing beauty—in double beauty, just as Peter had said it would, for the drapes were not drawn and the coloured lights shone in the french window.

They shone on Peter's face, too.

He didn't say anything. Just looked and looked at his two precious trees.

Toby Craig stood with his hands in his pockets, staring at his son. As if he were seeing him for the first time.

It was a private sort of moment, and Jill would have liked to slip away, but Dan was putting his heart into sorting the decorations.

She went over to him and whispered: "Peter probably wants to trim the tree by himself, honey."

"What? Oh. Oh, all right." He stood up. "Wait a minute, here's the angel. Peter, here's the angel."

Dixie, at ease now, poked her ruckled, velvety face interestedly towards the rakish little object, but Peter held it high. "See, daddy! The angel! You have to put it on the very top of the tree."

His father took it, then gave it back again. "You know more about this than I do," he said, almost shyly. "You'd better put it on."

"I can't reach!"

"I'll lift you up."

Jill pulled at Dan's sleeve. "Darling! Come on!"

Dan reluctantly gathered up his coat and, with a backward look, they slipped away while Peter, in his father's arms, was settling the angel in its new home.

As Dan pressed the elevator button, Jill leaned against the wall. "Whew!" she said simply.

Dan half-smiled, then his glance went to the door they had closed behind them. He would like very much to have stayed longer.

"You were wonderful, darling!" Jill slid her hand in his. "There was I shivering in my shoes when Mr. Craig blew up, and you sailed in and handled everything." Humbly, she added: "I guess you were right about me. From now on, just watch me look before I leap in all directions."

Dan viewed the prospect without enthusiasm. "Don't go to the other extreme," he cautioned. "You have to consider relative values. It's one thing not to be rash and foolhardy, but quite another to start closing in on yourself."

Jill stared at him. "I beg your pardon?" she said incredulously.

"I mean—well, for instance, think of Peter's face when his father lifted him and the angel! You can't take a chance of anything like that never happening again."

Jill couldn't believe what she was hearing, but she managed to say, "And what would you suggest?"

Dan thought a moment. Then he nodded. "We'd better get a Santa Claus letter every Christmas."

"Oh, darling!" Jill's voice broke a little as she put her face against his sleeve.

"What's the matter? Don't you think it's a good idea?"

The elevator came then. "Good!" Jill said, as they stepped in. "It's perfect! I never heard anything to equal it."

Dan took her arm. "I think it's nice," he said contentedly.

THE END.



"But she only stared at him, and when he moved she seemed to melt away into the darkness of the trees."

ALISON

By GORDON ROWBOTTOM.

Illustrated by EILEEN WALTON.

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HERE is a remote and tranquil corner in the West of England where a river winds through a landscape of trees and rolling hills of soft, red earth and broadens into an estuary beyond a village, which, for the purposes of this story, can be called Fordcharlton. The same interests of anonymity, this time for reasons less obvious to explain, prompt me to call the young man who figures in the story, simply—Jocelyn. How he came to be there on an August evening of some years ago is no longer important. Suffice it to say that he was at odds with the world in general and with one member of it—whose name was Alison—in particular, and, like many another young man in that predicament, he thought his own company, morose and ill-tempered though it might be, the best panacea to the stroke of injustice under which he was at the moment smarting. He had yet to learn that life has a way of pricking even the most righteous of our bubbles of self-pity.

So, when on this August evening of some years ago Jocelyn had found a clearing for his camp, he dropped off his rucksack and walked down to the water's edge. It was a lonely spot. He could see the roof of a cottage, set back a little from the river, and on the far side of the estuary was the village. The rest was all trees and water. He felt hot, and tired, but it had been worth the long scramble through the woods. The slant of the evening sun across the still water reached almost to the village, and Jocelyn sat for a while, smoking a cigarette, as he watched the sun sink towards the trees at the head of the estuary. A punt passed through the shadows close inshore. The small girl who was sculling it rested on her oars for a moment

when she saw Jocelyn, and then pulled for the landing stage in front of the cottage.

When he had finished his cigarette he went back to the clearing among the trees and began to collect wood for a fire. He didn't hear the girl come, and when she spoke he looked round at her in surprise.

"I've brought you some water."

"Have you?" said Jocelyn. "Well, that's nice of you." She looked small to have carried the water and he said, "You shouldn't have done it."

"Why not?"

Jocelyn put down the bundle of wood and looked at her more closely. "You're the girl in the punt, aren't you?"

The small girl nodded.

"I suppose you must get used to people wanting water?"

She shook her head.

"That's more what I wanted to hear," said Jocelyn. "It took me a long time to find this place and, quite honestly, it was a bit of a shock to see you come scooting up here before I'd even had time to get settled. I was going to use the water from the river."

"It's salt."

"Well I haven't got any salt, so I dare say it would have done." He turned away from her and went on collecting wood. When he had enough he heaped it together with some paper from his rucksack and put a match to it.

"You don't do it like the other," the girl said.

"No?" said Jocelyn. "I'm not much of a hand at this sort of thing. As a matter of fact, it's the first time I've been out camping."



"The girl had lifted her hair from her forehead. . . . 'My word!' he said. 'It must have been a bad one. You're a pretty brave girl, Alison.'"

"I'll do it for you, if you like."

"All right." Jocelyn watched her for a moment as she knocked aside his pile of wood and rebuilt the fire in her own way. Then he stretched out comfortably against a tree and lit a cigarette.

When the fire was blazing the girl went over to the rucksack and opened it.

"Help yourself," said Jocelyn. She looked up at him, suddenly frightened, and he said, "No, really, I mean it." But she only stared at him, and when he moved she seemed to melt away into the darkness of the trees.

Jocelyn woke early on the next morning, and after he had swum in the estuary he came back and found the small girl already at his camp. She was warming her hands over a fire.

"I'm glad you've come," he said. "Why did you run away like that last night? You gave me quite a fright." She didn't answer and he smiled at her and sat down beside the fire. "Can you cook?"

The girl nodded.

"Well, that's fine, because I can't. You'll find everything you want for the two of us in the rucksack."

"I've brought you some eggs."

Jocelyn looked at her curiously. "You come from the house by the river, don't you?"

"Yes."

"What's your name?"

"Alison."

"Then look here, Alison, as soon as we've had breakfast we'll go down and pay your mother for the eggs. I want to see her in any case to ask if it's all right for me to be here."

"No," the girl said, suddenly finding her tongue. "You mustn't go there; really you mustn't."

"But why not? You're not frightened of your mother, are you?"

"No," she whispered, "but you mustn't go."

"Does she know I'm here?"

"It's all right for you to be here, really it is."

"I see," said Jocelyn. "It's a sort of game, is it? The secret of Jocelyn's Gulch!" He put his finger into his mouth and made a noise like a Red Indian.

"I think you're silly," the girl said. "You don't want people to know you're here, do you?"

"No, I suppose not. But I'm bound to be seen sooner or later. I can't just go on hiding here for ever."

"Why not?"

"Well, food for one thing. There's only enough here for breakfast."

"I can bring food for you."

"No!" said Jocelyn. "I draw the line at that. I'll wade over to the village later."

"Wade?"

"Well, it's Fordcharlton, isn't it? There must be a way across."

"That was in Roman times," she said scornfully. "There's a ferry over now, but they'll be watching for you on the ferry."

"Will they? Well, how about that punt of yours? Couldn't I paint my face red or something, and paddle over in that?"

"You are silly," the girl said. "I could go over to the village for you, but I don't expect you've any money."

"As a matter of fact, I have."

"How much?"

"Enough for the two of us for quite a long time."

"Have you really enough for a long time?"

"Yes, I think so."

"You're not just saying it and then you'll want me to steal some like the other did?"

"No, indeed I'm not! And if you don't mind my saying so, whoever you played this game with before must have been distinctly odd."

"He wasn't like you. You're not really frightened, are you?"

"Was he?"

"Oh, yes, he was. You see he'd done something terrible."

"Had he? What had he done?"

"I don't know, but it was something terrible because he didn't like to be alone. That's why I used to come here."

"Weren't you frightened of being with him?"

She shook her head. "Only at the end when he thought I was going to give him away. I wasn't going to, but he wouldn't believe that."

"What did he do then?"

"He hit me. Look, I expect you can still see the mark."

The girl had lifted her hair from her forehead and Jocelyn put his hand gently on the unblemished skin. "My word!" he said. "It must have been a bad one. You're a pretty brave girl, Alison."

"Oh, it didn't hurt really. I was only frightened for a moment and then it was all right. He was a very funny man."

"He doesn't sound very funny to me."

"He was, though. Do you know, he was crying when he hit me."

The quiet air of realism in her voice made Jocelyn shiver. "I think I should try to forget about him," he said.

"I don't want to forget him. You see, one day I know he'll come back."

"I shouldn't think so."

"Oh, yes, he will. He's got to, because he's so unhappy."

"I'm sure he is, but don't you think you're rather wasting your sympathy on him. A man who could hit a little girl like you can't be much of a person."

"He only did it because he was frightened. He didn't mean to kill me, you know."

"Now, look here," said Jocelyn, "that's quite enough. I'm all for a bit of imagination, but you don't want to stretch it too far."

"You don't believe me, do you?"

"No, Alison, I don't. And from now on you're going to have your time cut out in helping me. Let's concentrate on that for the moment. How far had we got?"

"I'm going over to the village for you in my punt. You'd better make a list of what you want."

"I'd rather leave it all to you: sausages, bread, eggs, and things like that. Only don't you think we might have breakfast first?"

"All right," she said. "I'll start to do it now."

He lit a cigarette, and watched her as she held the pan over the fire. Her small face was flushed from the heat of it and she had screwed up her eyes against the smoke.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"I'm nearly eight. Really, it's my birthday to-morrow."

"Is it? Will you have lots of presents?"

"Last year I had my punt, but it won't be like that this year."

"Oh, I expect it will. They must be keeping them as a surprise. That's what I'd do if I were them."

The girl smiled at him from across the fire. "You're nice," she said. "I'm glad I was here to help you."

"So am I. You know, it's funny your name should be Alison. You don't look like an Alison to me."

"Why not?"

"I don't know; you just don't look like one. I used to know an Alison once but I'm sure she wouldn't have helped a fellow on the run."

"Did you like her?"

"Well, yes, I did rather, once. I wonder what sort of a girl you'll grow up into. I'm afraid I'm a bit hostile to your sex at the moment."

"Did she give you away, then?"

"You could call it that, I suppose. You'll be a good-looking girl one day, too, Alison. I hope it won't make you be like her. Do you think it's terribly important to be pretty?"

"I don't know," she said.

"No, I don't know either. I suppose it is a pretty important thing but I've got a theory that the nicest girls are just a bit off in their looks; nothing much, but too big a mouth or irregular teeth, something like that. On the law of averages, I mean—that you can't have everything. I don't quite know what we'll have to do about you."

The girl said, after a pause, "I had a plate in my mouth. I don't have it any longer, though."

"That's a pity," said Jocelyn, "but I suppose there's got to be an exception to every rule." He smiled at her as she fanned away a puff of smoke from her face. "It must be a lonely life for you here."

"I like it."

"Have you got a father?"

"Oh, yes. It's all right, though, because he only comes here on Sundays." The girl looked at him and shifted the pan from one hand to the other. "What have you done?"

"Done? Oh, I see. I'm afraid I'm a pretty bad hat, Alison. I robbed a bank."

"Did you do it alone?"

"Yes, it was easy really. I just walked over to the counter and said, 'Reach for it, *hombre*. This is a stick-up!' Then I filled my pockets with money and walked out. There was nothing to it," Jocelyn added modestly.

"Did you have a car to get away?"

"Nope! Just walked out of town."

The girl said in a puzzled way, "You are funny. Why do you alter your voice like that?"

"Oh, hell!" said Jocelyn. "I don't seem to do anything right in this game."

"Yes, you do." She touched his sleeve. "I like you much better than the other. You'd never hurt anybody, would you?"

"No," he said, "I don't think I'd ever do that."

Jocelyn was still lying by the fire when he saw a woman coming slowly towards them through the trees. He threw his cigarette away and scrambled to his feet. "Well, this is it, pardner," he said. "Maybe I'd better go quietly after all." He looked down for the girl but she had gone. "Alison!" he called. "Alison!"

The woman's face was very white. "Who are you?" she asked abruptly.

"Well, I'm afraid I'm a trespasser," said Jocelyn. "I wanted to ask you if it was all right to be here but she wouldn't let me." The woman was staring at him and he went on quickly, "You must think it very odd of me but the fact is it's been a sort of game." Jocelyn paused, and looked at her in bewilderment. "You are Alison's mother, aren't you?"

From the cottage down there?"

"Yes, I'm Alison's mother."

"We were playing this game. I think I'm supposed to be on the run and she's been helping me." His voice trailed away before the torment in the woman's face.

"Alison died . . . a year ago. She was found here."

"Oh, God!" said Jocelyn. He looked down and saw the empty frying-pan beside the fire. "But she was here," he said. "She made this fire."

His hand had gone to his head and the woman said steadily, "So you know what happened."

"Yes, I think I know."

"Did she . . . look all right?"

"Yes." He dropped his hand helplessly. "I thought it was just part of the game when she told me." They stood in silence, until he said, "She's waiting for him to come back. She must have thought it was him when she came by in her punt."

"Her punt!" The woman's breath came in a sob. "We sank it in the river. It was for her seventh birthday and she never had it."

Jocelyn put out his hand to steady her. "She had her birthday," he said gently. "She must have done. She told me she was nearly eight."



"CHRIST TAKING LEAVE OF HIS MOTHER"; A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY GERMAN
MASTERPIECE BY ALBRECHT ALTDORFER.

The grieving mother and her women, the calm and noble figure of her son, and the anxious disciples watching them, make a striking group in this important work by Albrecht Altdorfer (c. 1480-1538). A delightful feature is the group of the donors with their children in the lower right-hand corner. This painting, which is now to be seen in the Wernher Collection at Luton Hoo, is thought to have belonged to a church in Ratisbon. (Oil on panel: 55 by 32½ ins.)

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KEY : (1) OCELLATED OR HONDURAS TURKEY (*AGRIORHARIS OCELLATA*) ; (2) RIO GRANDE TURKEY (*MELEAGRIS CALLOPAVO*) ; STAG AND HEN WITH POULOTS ; (5) FLORIDA TURKEY (*MELEAGRIS CALLOPAVO OSCEOLA*) ; (6) MEXICAN TURKEY (*MELEAGRIS CALLOPAVO*) ; KING OF THE CHRISTMAS TABLE : THE DOMESTICATED

In days of old the boar's head "was first at the feast and foremost on the board" at dinstaff this country. It is also the most important item on the Thanksgiving table in the United States. It is known that turkeys were first domesticated. The dim covers of America found them to be firmly established in the eastern and southern empires of the natives. It is said that when Cortez entered Mexico City in 1519 he found turkeys so plentiful that some 500 a day were used for feeding the birds of prey in the Royal aviaries. Audubon, the famous American ornithologist, has set it on record that the

Specially painted for "The Illustrated London News" by Neave

© THE PILGRIMS' TURKEY (*MELEAGRIS CALLOPAVO SILVESTRIS*), NEW ENGLAND AND NORTH FLORIDA ; (4) DOMESTIC TURKEY (*MELEAGRIS CALLOPAVO CALLOPAVO*) ; (7) MERRIAM'S TURKEY, FROM THE FOOTHILLS OF THE ROCKIES (*MELEAGRIS CALLOPAVO MERRIAMI*)

TURKEY AND SOME OF ITS WILD AMERICAN FOREBARES.

slight differences in the shape of the feathers. Two of these, Mexican and those from the Eastern States of the U.S.A., are recognisable as ancient-day turkeys, the former having the lower back and rump blackish-purple and the upper tail covert tipped with white, while the latter has the tail covert tipped with chestnut brown. From these two were derived the Black Norfolk and the American Bronze. They were introduced separately into Europe. Mexico had been brought over by the Spanish and started breeding before the Pilgrim Fathers set out for the New World, and they took it back with them. There are records of it being in Britain by 1524, by which

time we know it was being used as a special delicacy at Christmas feasts. The Mexican Bronze, which was brought direct to England following the settlement of the New England States. The origin of the name "turkey" is somewhat in doubt. It has been suggested that the bird's own call, rendered as "turk-turk-turk," may have suggested the name. Another view is that it was from the name of the merchants who traded in the skins, mostly from the Atlantic and Mediterranean countries. These merchants were known as Turks, the name being apparently "foreign," and it may be that they traded the birds which then became known as turkey-fowls.



"POLYPHONIC EVENING, NOVEMBER": AN ATMOSPHERIC WINTER "SYMPHONY" PAINTED IN 1956. (Oil on canvas board: 48 by 70 ins.)



"WINTER LEGEND, 1957": A COMPOSITION WITH SOME CHARACTERISTIC BOTANICAL FOREGROUND DETAILS. (Oil on canvas board: 48 by 65 ins.)

THE SHARP AND SOMBRE CHILL OF WINTER: LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS BY ALAN REYNOLDS.

Winter is a season of great contrasts of light and tone which make up for the relative monotony of colour, and in these paintings Alan Reynolds has captured two striking winter light effects. The paintings shown here were also inspired by the scenery of Dorset, which has been described by a

lover of the county as presenting an "epitome of the scenery of Southern England." They were included in Alan Reynolds' last London exhibition, which was held at the Leicester Galleries in March. Next spring he is to have his second New York exhibition at the Durlacher Gallery.

Reproduced by courtesy of the artist, and the Leicester Galleries.



Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, 1822

from the original by J. G. Rennie

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Please don't let her be disappointed

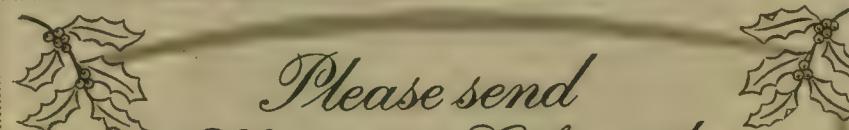
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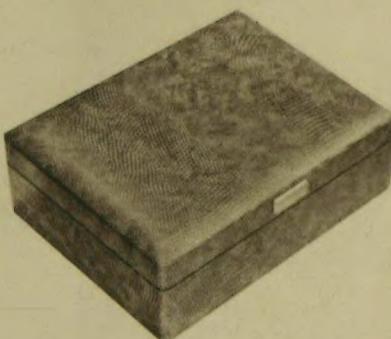
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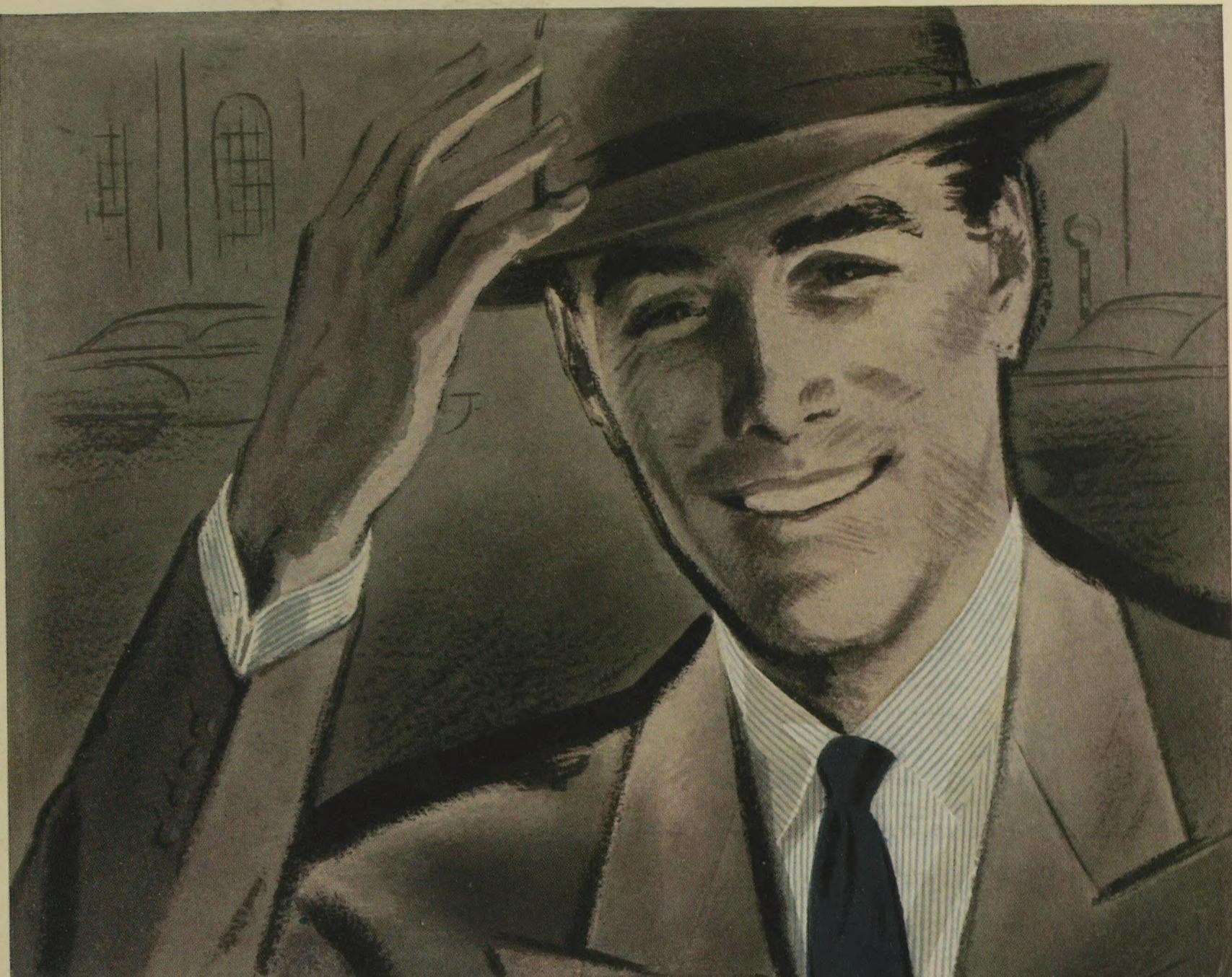
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